



the work and family legal center

80 Maiden Lane, Suite 606, New York, NY 10038 | t: 212.430.5982 | f: 212.430.5983 | info@abetterbalance.org | abetterbalance.org

## FACT SHEET

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### Paid Sick Time in New York City

#### Why do we need a paid sick time law in New York City?

- More than 1.3 million workers in New York City do not get a single paid sick day for themselves or to care for a sick child.<sup>1</sup> For these New Yorkers, taking time off from work to recover or get needed medical care means loss of pay, retaliation, or even being fired.<sup>2</sup>
- There are wide disparities by wage level in who has access to paid sick time. Low-income New Yorkers are significantly less likely to have paid sick time than other members of the workforce; nearly two-thirds of all low-wage workers in New York City have no paid sick time.<sup>3</sup>

#### What is the New York City Paid Sick Time Act?

- In the summer of 2009, New York City Council Member Gale Brewer introduced the Paid Sick Time Act, a bill that would establish a modest minimum floor of paid sick time for private sector workers employed in New York City.
- Under the current bill, covered workers would earn one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked. Smaller businesses would have to provide at least 5 paid sick days annually, while larger businesses would provide 9 days a year. Sick time could be used for an employee's own illness or to take care of a sick family member. To protect workers, the Act prohibits employers from retaliating against workers for taking sick leave.
- Employers will not have to change their policies if they already provide an equivalent amount of paid time off that can be used for the purposes covered in the Paid Sick Time Act.
- San Francisco implemented a similar paid sick time law in 2007, and its success is clear. Recent research confirms the policy's public health benefits and the lack of negative economic consequences.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, two-thirds of San Francisco employers now support the law.<sup>5</sup>

#### Is there public support for the Paid Sick Time Act?

- **YES!** The public overwhelmingly supports a paid sick time law. Three out of four New Yorkers favor a law requiring employers to give workers paid sick time, even when they are presented with all opposing arguments.<sup>6</sup>
- Following introduction of the Paid Sick Time Act, A Better Balance and the NY Paid Leave Coalition launched an enormous grassroots organizing campaign in New York City. Our coalition partners include—among others—1199 SEIU, NYC Central Labor Council, Make the Road NY, ROC-NY, Community Service Society of NY, DWU, PHANYC, NY Communities for Change, the Working Families Party, MomsRising, RWDSU, NYCLU, Greater NY Labor-Religion Coalition, Planned Parenthood, Institute for the Puerto Rican/Hispanic Elderly, Workers United, Center for Children's Initiatives, SEIU 32BJ, UFT, Local 1500 UFCW, DC 1707, Doctors Council SEIU, CIR/SEIU Healthcare, Women of Color Policy Network, and GMHC. Together, we have organized rallies and events, prepared sign-on letters, engaged in extensive public education and secured deep support throughout the city.

#### What is the status of the Paid Sick Time Act?

- Despite widespread public support and a veto-proof majority of 35 City Council Members signed on as co-sponsors, City Council Speaker Quinn announced in October 2010 that she would not allow a vote on the Paid Sick Time Act.
- Speaker Quinn has promised to review her decision on paid sick time every two months. Advocates have redoubled efforts to pass the Paid Sick Time Act in 2012, and urge Speaker Quinn to bring the bill to a vote.

**We need the support of individuals and organizations across the city to pass the Paid Sick Time Act. For more information or to get involved, please contact A Better Balance at 212-430-5982 or info@abetterbalance.org.**



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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Reiss, Nancy Rankin & Krista Pietrangel, *Sick in the City: What the Lack of Paid Leave Means for Working New Yorkers*, A Better Balance and Community Service Society of New York (Oct. 2009), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Approximately one in six workers reports that they or a family member have been fired, suspended, punished or threatened by an employer due to needing time off for illness. See: Human Impact Partners, *A Health Impact Assessment of the Healthy Families Act of 2009* (June 2009), p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> Reiss, et. al., *Sick in the City*, p. 4. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, while 84% of earners in the top wage quartile in New York City get paid sick time, only 37% of workers in the bottom quarter of New York City wage earners have access to that benefit.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Drago and Vicky Lovell, *San Francisco's Paid Sick Leave Ordinance: Outcomes for Employers and Employees*, Institute for Women's Policy Research (Feb. 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Reiss, et. al., *Sick in the City*, p. 16.