

Paid sick time would help, not burden, all businesses

Recently, Carl Hum, president and CEO of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, wrote on this page that the paid sick time bill being considered by the City Council would be a detriment to local businesses.

Despite the fine work done by the Brooklyn Chamber, and the chambers across the city, I must respectfully disagree. Offering employees paid time off to recuperate from illnesses results in a series of important benefits.

I know, because I'm a small-business owner myself — when not attending to my Council duties, I own and operate a private law firm in Gravesend.

First, one sick employee can result in several sick employees, which is a major blow to productivity. In addition, by allowing employees the chance to get better, we save countless dollars in health care costs. Finally, offering paid sick leave is a major contributor to employee morale: A healthy business is a happy business.

I don't believe the charge that this is a one-size-fits-all bill. The needs of smaller businesses versus larger businesses were taken into account by splitting the bill into two tiers — one that would provide employees with up to nine days off a year in businesses with more than 10 employees, and five days for businesses with fewer than 10 em-



ployees. Those days wouldn't just be granted — they would have to be earned.

Doing business in New York is undoubtedly expensive, but I don't believe this bill to be burdensome. According to an October 2009 report from the Institute for Women's Policy Research, it would cost only \$5.37 per worker a week for small businesses, which works out to 15 cents an hour, and \$7.94 per week — only 23 cents an hour — for larger businesses.

The important thing to remember, too, is that the sick days are a safety net. A National Health Interview Survey shows that 48% of workers with paid sick days don't even use them.

I believe that the overwhelming majority of workers will use them responsibly, especially because they're not unlimited.

I don't think this is the sort of issue that could be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. The sheer volume of cases would be impossible for the Human

Rights Commission to handle. We need a resolution for sick workers now, not a vague goal obscured by years of hearings and legal red tape.

Under the current system, we are forcing people to come into work sick, infecting their co-workers and customers as they suffer through their day. We are forcing parents to pay money they don't have for someone to care for their sick children — or, worse, forcing those parents to keep their children in school.

To put it simply, it's inhumane to treat people like this.

The Institute for Women's Policy Research also makes an important point, that a full 42% of the city's workforce — more than 1.2 million people — lack paid sick days.

We can do better.

It is the responsibility of government to ensure that people are being treated fairly and equitably by businesses. For years, I have been providing paid sick time to my employees without a negative impact — in fact, I believe it has made my business stronger.

I support the paid sick time bill. I encourage my colleagues in the City Council to support it, too, so we can deliver this necessary service to hardworking New Yorkers.

Councilman Domenic Recchia Jr. represents the 47th District, which includes Coney Island, Gravesend, Bensonhurst and Brighton Beach.

In fact, I believe it [paid sick time] has made my business stronger.

Domenic Recchia Jr.

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