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CLEVELAND: 3631 PERKINS AVENUE SUITE 4C - EAST • CLEVELAND, OHIO, 44114 • TEL: 216/361-9801 • FAX: 216/361-9810
COLUMBUS: 1372 GRANDVIEW AVE. SUITE 242 • COLUMBUS, OHIO, 43212 • TEL: 614/486-4601 • FAX: 614/486-4603
[HTTP://WWW.POLICYMATTERSOHIO.ORG](http://www.policymattersohio.org)

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Contact: Amy Hanauer, 216-361-9801

View the report at: http://www.policymattersohio.org/PaidSickDays2008_0602.htm

Worker experiences reveal need for paid sick days New report features profiles of Ohio workers

Interviews with two business owners and 18 employees reveal strong evidence of the need for paid sick days in Ohio, according to a new report released today by Policy Matters Ohio. “Whether it’s the cancer survivor who caught her tumor early because her employer’s policy allowed doctor visits, or the 17-year factory veteran who still has no paid sick days, Ohio worker stories demonstrate a need for a healthier standard,” said Amy Hanauer, executive director of Policy Matters Ohio.

Currently more than 2.2 million Ohio workers have no paid sick days and 3.3 million cannot use paid sick days to care for a sick child or parent. An Ohio coalition gathered 270,000 signatures last year and sought to have the legislature act on the proposal by last month. The legislature let the deadline pass without acting, so the coalition must now seek about 120,000 additional signatures in order to get the measure on the November ballot.

The Healthy Families Act would require employers of more than 25 employees to allow full-time workers to earn seven paid sick days a year and to allow part-timers to earn sick days on a pro-rated basis. The days could be used if the worker or an immediate family member needed to recuperate from injury or illness, obtain preventive care, or get medical treatment.

Among the notable stories captured by the Policy Matters report:

- A now-retired volunteer administrator who used a paid sick day to get a mammogram, revealing a malignant lump – she continued working through her treatment and has been cancer free since.
- A restaurant worker who has no paid sick days and admits to working when sick and two employees who confess they’ve driven trucks or buses while sick because they couldn’t afford the unpaid day. All three stories demonstrate how a lack of sick days threatens overall public health.
- A mother with 17 years of seniority at a Cleveland factory who has a good vacation policy but gets “points” if she calls in sick without giving her employer advance notice.
- A mother who says she gave birth on a Saturday and returned to work without missing a day.
- Two employers who argue that providing paid sick days makes their workplaces more productive and competitive.
- A husband who could not miss work when his wife’s lymphoma required chemotherapy
- A father who, after what he describes as years of steady attendance, had to take unpaid time off for serious injuries, forcing his family to go into debt and seek food stamps and church assistance.



- Several professionals whose supportive policies have helped them meet their families' needs and inspired deep commitment to their workplaces.
- Two men who felt torn when their mothers were hospitalized (one for heart surgery, one for cancer) and they couldn't take a day off to assist.
- Strong support among those interviewed for a legislative standard requiring paid sick days.

The interviews reflected what government data confirms – that many Ohio employees (42 percent) do not have paid sick days and that low- and middle-income workers are less likely to have this standard than more affluent Ohioans. Half of those with paid sick days still do not miss a single day of work in an average year. A study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research finds that providing paid sick days in Ohio would yield a net savings of more than \$1.00 per worker per week.

"Our interviews reflect that Ohio workers try valiantly to meet their obligations to their jobs and to their own health and families," Hanauer said. "The employers we spoke with also argued that providing paid sick days can increase workplace productivity. A society as prosperous as ours, where we expect many parents to work, should give employees the flexibility to better manage their jobs and their health."

For more information, and the entire report, *Paid Sick Days: Voices from Ohio*, see
http://www.policymattersohio.org/PaidSickDays2008_0602.htm.

