
POLICY MATTERS OHIO

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Full report available at http://www.policymattersohio.org/ahealthystandard2007_1002.htm

Study finds 2.2 million Ohioans would benefit from paid sick day expansion New Policy Matters Ohio research finds every other advanced economy offers this standard

A paid sick day policy like the one currently being proposed in Ohio would extend the ability to earn paid sick days to an estimated 2.2 million Ohio workers according to an analysis released today by Policy Matters Ohio. An estimated 3.3 million Ohio workers who now cannot earn paid sick days to care for ill children or other family members would gain that benefit from the proposal.

Advocates in Ohio are circulating petitions to ensure that all eligible employees in Ohio can earn paid sick days. The proposal requires most employers to permit full-time employees to earn up to seven paid sick days and part-time workers to earn sick days on a pro-rated basis. Sick days could be used if the worker or an immediate family member needed to recuperate from physical or mental illness or injury, or to obtain preventive care or medical treatment.

“Every other advanced industrialized nation in the world has policies requiring that workers be given paid time off when sick,” said Amy Hanauer, Policy Matters Executive Director and report author. “Nations far less prosperous than the U.S. also have this basic standard.”

The study, *A Healthy Standard: Paid Sick Days in Ohio*, finds that a majority of U.S. and Ohio workers – about 58 percent – can earn some paid sick days. “This is a policy that makes sense and works well for the employers of most people in Ohio,” Hanauer said. However, a large minority of Ohio workers, 42 percent, cannot earn paid sick days. Workers who can’t earn paid sick days must either go to work when ill or forego a day of pay.

The study cited research showing that provision of paid sick days can lead to better disease containment, faster recuperation and earlier treatment. For workplaces, this can mean that fewer employees actually get sick, duration of illnesses can be shortened, workers can be more productive and savings can result.

Other findings from the study, available online at www.policymattersohio.org, include:

- Many workers use very few sick days. Half of those who have paid sick days do not miss a single day of work for illness in a year. Workers covered by paid sick days miss 3.9 days on average for their own illness or injury plus an estimated 1.7 days to care for family members or see doctors.
- Adults in families with children substantially increased their hours of work over the past generation, making it more likely that a sick child does not have a parent who is at home. Yet

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access to paid sick days has not increased and only 30 percent of workers can use paid days to care for sick children. Children recover more quickly with parental care.

- Access to paid sick days varies by occupation, pay, and industry in Ohio. Coverage is low in some occupations that have extensive public contact, such as retail trade (less than half); arts, entertainment and recreation (just over 1/3rd); and accommodation and food service (less than 1/4th). These three sectors combined have more than 670,000 Ohio workers without sick days.
- Rates of coverage are also low in some physically demanding jobs that might be difficult or unsafe to perform when injured or ill. For example, just 25 percent of construction workers have paid sick days, leaving more than 170,000 Ohio construction workers unprotected by this standard. Nearly half of manufacturing workers – more than 389,000 Ohioans – cannot earn paid sick days.
- Other sectors have much better rates of coverage, with six sectors providing paid sick days to more than two-thirds of workers. Even in these relatively well-covered sectors, however, more than 100,000 Ohio workers are still left with no paid sick days.
- Public sector workers are more likely to have paid sick days. Virtually all U.S. government or Ohio state employees can earn paid sick days. County and city coverage is more mixed.
- Coverage is lower in low-wage occupations. Thus, those who can least afford an unpaid day are most likely to have to forego pay or work while sick. Only 21 percent of workers with wages in the bottom 25 percent of wage rates have paid sick days.
- Middle-class Ohio workers also need better sick day coverage. Nearly half of those earning between the 25th and 50th percentiles don't have sick days, and nearly 40 percent of those earning between the median and \$21.65 an hour (the 75th percentile) have no sick days. Even among the top quarter of earners, up to three in ten have no paid sick days.
- Providing paid sick days in Ohio would yield a net savings of more than \$1.00 per worker per week, from reduced spread of illness, reduced turnover, and healthier workers, according to new research on a similar policy done for this study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

In addition to the Ohio action, a recently-introduced federal bill would provide paid sick days. Paid sick day legislation was introduced in 11 states in 2007 and was passed in the city of San Francisco. In seven states, the law now says that employees can use sick days and other types of leave to care for ill family members.

“A paid sick day standard would reduce the spread of disease, encourage preventive care and recovery, allow parents to be with sick children, and improve worker well-being,” said Hanauer. “An economy as prosperous as ours, in which parents are expected to work, requires that we provide workers with the basic flexibility that allows them to manage their lives and their health.”

*Policy Matters Ohio is a non-profit, non-partisan policy research institute, dedicated to researching how the economy can work better for everyone in Ohio. The report **A Healthy Standard: Paid Sick Days in Ohio** is available online at www.policymattersohio.org.*

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