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Montgomery County Passes One of Strongest Paid Sick Days Laws in the Nation

Workers to earn up to seven paid sick and safe days per year; will no longer lose income or risk job loss when illness strikes

Rockville, MD—Montgomery County today unanimously passed legislation ensuring that all private-sector employees in the county can earn paid sick days. [Bill 60-14](#) includes some of the strongest paid sick days protections in the country for even very small businesses.

Under the new legislation, workers in Montgomery County businesses with five or more employees will earn one hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked, up to 56 hours (seven days) annually. Workers in smaller businesses with less than five employees will also earn seven days – four paid plus three unpaid but with job protection. The time can be used for the diagnosis, care or treatment of the worker or a member of their family or in instances of domestic violence or sexual assault. The law, which also protects employees from retaliation for enforcing their rights under the law, will go into effect on October 1, 2016.

The legislation adds to the growing momentum for paid sick days around the country and is expected to spur passage of a statewide bill next year.

“This policy will improve the lives of working families in our county where more than 100,000 workers currently lack even one paid sick day,” said Montgomery County Council President George Leventhal, who co-sponsored the legislation with Councilmember Nancy Navarro.

“More parents will be free from making the heart wrenching choice between taking care of a sick child or losing a day of pay.”

Melissa Broome, acting executive director of the Job Opportunities Task Force, leads Working Matters, a coalition of 140 organizations working to advance paid sick days locally and statewide. She hailed the vote as “a tremendous win” and praised the Council for their

leadership. “Montgomery County has taken a major step toward ensuring that workplace policies catch up with the realities faced by today’s working families. No hardworking person should face financial crisis because of something as common as the flu or a child’s ear infection.”

Paid sick time has gained support across the country over the last few years. According to a recent New York Times/CBS poll, [more than four in five Americans](#) support a policy guaranteeing workers can earn paid sick days. Among those are business owners who’ve shown strong support for the issue.

Mimi Hassanein, executive director of Learning Centers Management, has always provided paid sick days for her staff. “As the owner of several child care centers in the County, I know it is unreasonable to expect that employees will never get sick,” said Hassanein. “For many, losing even one day’s pay is difficult.”

Hassanein pointed to the difficulty for parents as well, given that a child must be fever free for 24 hours without medication before they can return to day care. “It is nearly impossible for families to respect this policy if they cannot earn paid sick leave. The actions taken by the Council today will go a long way toward helping to solve this problem.”

To date four states and 20 cities or counties have enacted such measures either through legislation or voter-driven ballot initiatives, and more wins are on the horizon. A statewide bill made progress in Annapolis in 2015 and will be reintroduced next session.

The measure was supported by a broad group of local labor, faith and community organizations including 32BJ SEIU, Advocates for Children and Youth, CASA, Jewish Community Relations Council, Jews United for Justice, Job Opportunities Task Force, LiUNA! Mid-Atlantic, Maryland Working Families, the Metro Washington Council AFL-CIO, MomsRising, the Montgomery County Education Association, National Nurses United, Progressive Maryland, Public Justice Center, SEIU Local 500, UFWC Local 1994 MCGEO, and UFCW Local 400.

“Today’s passage of paid sick days in Montgomery County is a huge victory and further proof of the undeniable momentum for paid sick days sweeping the country. Along with the 20 other coalitions in the Family Values @ Work network, I want to congratulate the Working Matters coalition, whose persistence and leadership means that workers in Montgomery County will no longer have to choose between following doctor’s orders and putting food on the table,” said Ellen Bravo, director of Family Values @ Work.

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