



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 312: An Act Concerning the Expansion of Connecticut Paid Sick Days

**Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut
March 7, 2022**

Thank you distinguished chairs and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 312: An Act Concerning the Expansion of Connecticut Paid Sick Days. Universal Health Care Foundation's mission to accelerate the movement for health justice recognizes that health is a human right fundamentally related and core to social justice and equity. SB 312 is absolutely necessary in order for everyone in Connecticut to reach their best health potential, especially as we continue to respond and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Expanding paid sick leave is an issue of social and racial justice.

Workers of color are overrepresented in industries that do not provide paid sick days, including domestic workers and other frontline jobs that carry greater risk of exposure to COVID-19 and are far less likely to have access to the benefit than white workers. Without paid sick days, workers are forced to either go to work sick or miss their paycheck, and in some cases lose their jobs entirely. Pre-pandemic, low-wage workers and workers of colors were already less likely than higher wage and white workers to have access to paid sick leave, and now the gap is even more dangerous and harmful. Communities of color have faced the most severe economic and health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Inequality in access to paid sick leave only deepens the harm and economic injustices.

This also disproportionately affects women workers. Lack of paid sick leave blocks women from returning to work. 55% of adults who reported not being able to work due to COVID-19 illness and/or caregiving were women. Those who reported they were unable to work were also more likely to report lost income and difficulty paying bills than those who continued to work¹.

Lack of paid sick days results in inflated health care costs.

Workers without paid sick days are more than twice as likely to seek emergency room care for themselves, a child, or relative because they can't take time away from work during normal business hours to obtain routine care. This leads to higher health insurance costs and medical expenses through the use of emergency rooms when lower

¹ Mason, J. (February 2022). *Lack of Paid Leave Stifles Economic Recovery and Blocks Women's Return to Work*. National Partnership for Women and Families.

level, less expensive care is more appropriate. In addition, lack of access to preventative care due to the inability to take time off results in serious health consequences. Medical conditions that could have been resolved with early intervention become more severe when not addressed in a timely manner, resulting in lower quality of life, more necessary medical intervention, and higher medical costs.

We urge your support in protecting the health of Connecticut's most vulnerable workers and challenging racial and social inequalities through the passage of this legislation. Thank you.

Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut's mission is to accelerate the movement for health justice for everybody because health is a human right and core to social justice and equity.