

FACT SHEET



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Support paid quarantine leave during COVID-19

Problem: Approximately 41 percent of private sector workers, **1.2 million workers in Virginia, have no paid sick days** or any paid time off (PTO). During the COVID-19 pandemic, this creates a crisis for low-wage workers who must choose between staying home to quarantine themselves and their family and getting paid.

Policy solution: Create paid quarantine leave to require employers to provide up to 80 hours (2 weeks) of paid time during the COVID-19 pandemic for an employee to use to quarantine themselves or to care for a family member with COVID-19. The amount of paid time would be determined by the average number of hours the employee works over 2 weeks. Employees would be eligible if they work, on average, at least 20 hrs/week.

Who benefits: Almost everyone benefits when sick workers can stay home to recover, which is why *85 percent of voters say employers should offer paid sick leave*. Paid quarantine leave helps:

- **Workers and their families** - When a worker takes 3.5 unpaid sick days, the average family loses a month's worth of groceries. Workers are forced to choose between feeding their families and caring for themselves or their children. Workers and their families need to be able to stay home if they contract COVID-19.
- **Schools** - Parents who don't have paid sick days or PTO are *more than twice as likely* to send their children to school sick, than parents who have paid sick days. Sick children can't learn. Sick children spread germs to children and teachers. In order for our schools to reopen safely, working families need paid quarantine leave.

- **Public health** - Low-wage workers (food-service, personal health care, and childcare workers) are the least likely to have paid sick days or PTO. *More than 80 percent of food industry workers and 75 percent of child care workers have no paid sick days*. No one wants sick workers to risk spreading or contracting COVID-19.
- **Businesses** - Without paid sick days, workers go to work sick, infecting others and impacting productivity. If an employee contracts COVID-19 and goes to work, the entire business must close for 2 weeks. Providing paid quarantine leave allows businesses to stay open and sick employees to recover.
- **People of color** – In the US, about *38 percent of African Americans and 50 percent of Latinos* do not have access to a single paid sick day. More than 25 percent of Latino households and 30 percent of African American households have no savings and cannot afford to take unpaid time off from work. Growing data shows that African-Americans and Latinos are dying from COVID-19 at higher rates than white people. Paid quarantine leave is an equity issue.

Fifteen states have paid sick days: Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington have paid sick day standards. Colorado recently a paid sick days standard and paid quarantine leave for COVID-19.

Sources: Family Values @ Work, National Partnership for Women & Families, NPR, and U.S Bureau of Labor & Statistics