

FACT SHEET



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Support paid sick days during COVID-19

Problem: Even before the pandemic, approximately 41 percent of private sector workers, **1.2 million workers in Virginia, had no paid sick days** or any paid time off (PTO). This creates a crisis for low-wage workers who must choose between taking a sick day for themselves or their children and getting paid.

Policy solution: Create a special COVID-19 specific benefit of 80 hours (2 weeks) of paid sick time for workers to use during the pandemic to quarantine themselves or a family member with COVID-19, plus a “regular” paid sick day standard to provide 5 paid sick days (40 hours) each year.

The COVID-19 benefit would apply to all full-time and part-time private and public sector workers. The regular standard would apply only to full-time workers. Under the regular benefit, workers would accrue 1 hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked. PTO policies would satisfy the requirement.

Who benefits: Almost everyone benefits from a paid sick day standard, which is why *85 percent of voters* say employers should offer paid sick days. Paid sick days help:

- **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 children need to be able to stay home when they are sick.
- **Schools** - Parents who don’t have paid sick days 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.

- **Public health** - Low-wage workers (food-service, personal health care, and childcare workers) are the least likely to have paid sick days. *More than 80 percent of food industry workers and 75 percent of childcare workers* have no paid sick days. More than half of all Norovirus outbreaks can be traced back to sick food service workers who were forced to choose between working sick and losing pay or their job.
- **Businesses** - Without paid sick days, workers go to work sick, infecting others and impacting productivity. Employers lose *\$160 billion annually in productivity* due to “presenteeism” (the practice of coming to work despite illness or injury). Providing paid sick days results in reduced turnover – saving businesses money. The restaurant industry, which has a high turnover rate, found that implementing workplace benefits *can reduce turnover by 50 percent*.
- **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.

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 days standards.

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