

# FACT SHEET



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## Support paid sick days for all employees

**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). This is a crisis for low-wage workers who must choose between taking a sick day for themselves or their children and getting paid. Workers who go to work sick endanger their co-workers, the public and their employer's business.

**Policy solution:** Create a paid sick day standard to require all employers to provide five paid sick days (40 hours) each year for full-time workers that could be used for themselves or to care for sick children. Part-time employees would accrue fewer paid sick hours based on hours worked. PTO policies qualify as paid sick days.

**Who benefits:** Almost everyone benefits from a paid sick day standard, which is why 83 percent of Virginia registered voters support a policy proposal to provide paid sick days. Strong majorities of Democrats (96 percent), Independents (78 percent) and Republicans (72 percent) all support a paid sick day standard. 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.

**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 and their paycheck. An October 2020 report published in *Health Affairs* showed that the paid sick leave provision of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) reduced the spread of coronavirus. Researchers called paid sick days "a highly effective tool to flatten the curve."

**Businesses** - 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.

**Can Virginia businesses afford paid sick days?** Most Virginia businesses already provide paid sick days or PTO. The pandemic has made clear that businesses cannot afford to be without a paid sick day policy. Fifteen states have already passed paid sick day standards and most of them rank higher than Virginia in overall health. Virginia could phase in a policy so all businesses could have time to adjust.

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