



UPDATED NEWS RELEASE! EVENT WILL BE HELD ON ZOOM (due to weather)

MONDAY, Feb. 1, 2021 – 12 noon

**Home Health Care Workers to Host Prayer Vigil ([Zoom LINK](#))
Calling on Virginia Legislators to Pass Paid Sick Days Legislation**

Monday, Feb. 1, 12:00-Richmond: [Vigil on Zoom and streamed live on Facebook \(LINK\)](#)



“Home care workers are on the front lines of combatting COVID. We should have paid sick days so that we can take care of ourselves while we're taking care of your family members. We should have the right to join a union and collectively bargain for what we need to stay safe and healthy.”

- Thomasine Wilson, Home Care worker and Home Care Chairwoman of SEIU Virginia 512, Richmond

RICHMOND, Va – On Monday, Feb. 1, at noon, home health care workers and faith leaders will join a prayer vigil calling on Virginia legislators to pass paid sick day legislation. **The event will be held on Zoom** (due to weather).

The vigil is part of a national day calling attention to care givers organized by the SEIU union. **On the first day of Black History Month, we unite in a shared spiritual bond, calling for racial and economic justice for the care workers who are the backbone of our families and our communities.**

SPEAKERS: ([Zoom LINK](#))

Shonta Mills – Lead Home Care Organizer, SEIU Virginia 512

Home Health Care Workers - Joyce Barnes, Lauralyn Clark, and Thomasine Wilson

Pastor Rodney Hunter – Wesley United Methodist Church, Richmond

Cantor Dara Rosenblatt – Temple Beth-El, Richmond

WHY: The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the deep cracks in our nation's already broken and unjust long-term care system. Home care workers -- predominantly Black, Latinx, and Asian women -- have

historically and intentionally been underpaid and overlooked, and today, they are risking their own families' health to care for others, oftentimes forced to make the impossible choice of going to work unprotected or staying at home without pay.

WHAT: Caregivers and faith leaders are uniting in a virtual interdenominational prayer vigil to lift up home care and nursing home workers -- primarily women and women of color -- and honor the essential care they provide to our nation's aging parents, grandparents, and loved ones with disabilities.

FACTS: The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy and the other members of the [Virginians for Paid Sick Days Coalition](#) are calling on lawmakers to pass legislation to expand access to paid sick days, such as the bill sponsored by Delegate Elizabeth Guzman ([HB 2137](#)) that would require employers to provide essential workers with 40 hours of paid sick leave. The Coalition sees paid sick days as a critical issue that must be addressed by the General Assembly.

Paid sick days will allow workers to care for their short-term health needs or those of family members, including going to the doctor and getting tested for COVID-19. Businesses will benefit from higher employee productivity, healthier workplaces, and lower employee turnover. Studies show that employees working while sick cost the national economy approximately [\\$160 billion per year](#).

Even before COVID-19, 41 percent of private sector workers, [1.2 million workers in Virginia](#), had no paid sick days or any paid time off. A [new study by Harvard University researchers](#) shows that only one-third of Virginia service-sector workers at large employers have access to paid sick days. The lack of paid sick days creates a crisis for low wage workers who must choose between taking a sick day for themselves or to care for a family member and getting paid. If they bring COVID-19 into the workplace, they risk the health of hundreds and potentially thousands of people.

RESOURCES:

[Factsheet: paid sick days for home care workers](#)

[Factsheet: paid sick days bills and statistics](#)

[Virginians for Paid Sick Days](#) is a statewide coalition of 25 organizations fighting to establish a paid sick day standard that keeps Virginians healthy and keeps our economy running.

[The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy](#) advocates economic, racial, social, and environmental justice in Virginia's policies and practices through education, prayer, and action. VICPP is a non-partisan coalition of more than 700 faith communities working for a more just society.

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[Link to online News Release](#)