

FACT SHEET



Support Paid Sick Days for Virginia Workers

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 creates 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 the ability of the business to remain open. Workers who send their children to school sick endanger other children and teachers.

Policy solution: In 2021, the General Assembly passed a bill to provide paid sick days to 30,000 home health care workers. In 2023, VICPP seeks to expand coverage to all workers by creating a paid sick day standard that requires all employers to provide five paid sick days (40 hours) each year for full-time workers that can be used for themselves or to care for sick children. Part-time employees could accrue fewer paid sick hours based on hours worked. PTO policies that allow workers to take time to care for themselves or sick family members meet the bill requirements.

Who benefits: Almost everyone benefits from a paid sick day standard, which is why 83 percent of Virginia's registered voters support a paid sick day standard. Strong majorities of Democrats (96 percent), Independents (78 percent), and Republicans (72 percent) support a paid sick day standard. Paid sick days help:

Businesses – Employers lose \$160 billion annually in productivity due to “presenteeism” - 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.

Workers and their families – When a worker takes 3.5 unpaid sick days, the average family loses a month's worth of groceries. Workers must 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 struggle to learn, and spread germs to children and teachers.

Public health – Workers in certain industries (food service, personal health care, and child care workers) are the least likely to have 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. An October 2020 report 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.”

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.

Protect Virginians: The continued impacts of the pandemic have made clear that businesses need a paid sick day policy. Sixteen states have already passed paid sick day standards, and many of them rank higher than Virginia in overall health. Virginia can be a top state for business and for the workers who make business possible.

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