



February 22, 2024

Dear Members of Labor and Public Employees Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Maryam Elahi, I am the President & CEO of the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut. I am writing to emphasize the critical importance of expanding paid sick days to all employees in our state through passage of Senate Bill No. 7: An Act Concerning Connecticut Paid Sick Days.

The Community Foundation is part of a collaborative effort with 50 organizations to end child poverty in CT. This bill is a critical step toward that goal because the impact of paid sick leave extends far beyond the workplace—it ripples through our communities, schools, and homes, profoundly affecting the health and academic success of our youngest citizens.

In Connecticut, over 500,000 children are currently enrolled in schools, ranging from kindergarten to high school. Every school year, thousands of these children are forced to stay home due to illness or injury. Nationally, seven out of ten school-aged children miss a day or more of school each year due to health issues.¹ This not only disrupts their education but also places additional burdens on their families, who may struggle to balance work responsibilities with caring for their sick children. Many parents find themselves in the impossible position of having to choose between their jobs and their children's health. Without access to paid sick days, they risk losing income or even their jobs if they take time off to care for their sick children.

Workers of color and low-wage workers are disproportionately affected by the lack of access to paid sick leave, exacerbating existing inequalities and perpetuating economic injustice. The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the urgency of this issue, as frontline workers—predominantly women and people of color—risked their health without adequate support.

The proposed legislation is a beacon of hope for countless individuals who have long been overlooked and underserved by our current laws. By eliminating the employer size threshold and the restrictive definition of "service worker," this bill would guarantee paid sick time to all employees, regardless of the size or industry of their employer. This change is long overdue and would bring Connecticut's policies in line with those of our neighboring states, ensuring fairness and consistency across the region.

I urge you to support and pass legislation that ensures all workers in Connecticut have the right to paid sick leave. By doing so, we can make significant strides toward ending childhood poverty and creating a more equitable society for all our residents. Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Maryam Elahi, President & CEO

¹ National Partnership for Women & Families. Healthy Kids, Healthy Schools: The Case for a National Paid Sick Days Standard, Aug. 2022, nationalpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/healthy-kids-healthy-schools-the-case-for-paid-sick-days.pdf.

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