



AAUW of Virginia 2021 Legislative Priority Fact Sheet for Members

What: Paid Sick Leave

Why it is important:

Unlike most developed countries worldwide, the U.S. does not guarantee paid time off for illness, family care, or parental leave. Offering such paid time off improves worker performance, benefiting employees, employers, and the economy; contributes to improved public health; and provides the economic security that individuals and families need. These potential benefits have been highlighted by the pandemic. Paid sick days are essential to stop the spread of COVID-19 and enable businesses, schools, churches, and other facilities to open safely. Elected officials must adopt policies to give workers paid time off for illness and care giving. AAUW-VA has joined the Coalition of Virginians for Paid Sick Leave, a state-wide coalition of advocacy groups, non-profits, unions, and faith leaders to urge Virginia lawmakers to support legislation to require employers to provide paid sick leave to slow the spread of COVID-19

Status of legislation:

In 2020, the Virginia House of Delegates passed a bill requiring public and private employers with 15 or more employees to provide those employees with earned paid sick leave. The proposal cleared the House on a party-line vote but stalled in the Senate when the lawmakers that originally voted for the bill reconsidered in the face of intense opposition from industry and business groups. The legislation's coverage of part-time workers ended the debate and killed the bill.

This year, the Coalition is supporting two bills. Senator Barbara Favola is authoring a bill that would allow employees to use paid sick leave to care for sick family members. Delegate Elizabeth Guzman is authoring a bill that would provide paid sick leave for "essential workers." We do not yet have numbers for these bills but will provide them as soon as we have them.

The following legislators were patrons of the sick leave bill in 2020:

- Senate: Favola, Stanley, Barker, Bell, Boysko, Ebbin, Hashmi, Locke, Marsden, McClellan
- House: Guzman, Delaney
- Additional senators who may support in principle: Saslaw, Marsden, Barker, Peterson, Deeds, Mason, and Lewis

Draft letter or script for telephone call:

As your constituent, I am (sending this letter/calling you) on behalf of myself and the more than 1,000 members of the American Association of University Women in 24 branches in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

AAUW of Virginia is committed to achieving equity for women and girls and creating a secure economic future for all Virginians. We have joined with the Coalition of Virginians for Paid Sick Days to urge you to expand access to paid sick days as a public health imperative. Paid sick days will allow workers to care for their short-term health needs or those of a family member, including going to the doctor or getting tested for COVID-19. The lack of paid sick days creates a crisis for low-wage workers, including women and people of color, who must choose between working while sick or getting paid. If they bring COVID into the workplace, they risk the health of many others. Healthier workers will lead to healthier workplaces and more economically secure families. It's time for Virginia to pass a paid sick leave bill.

Can we count on you to support legislation to this end during this legislative session? **OR** Thank you for your leadership.

Additional key points for phone call or legislative staff discussion (taken from Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy Fact Sheet):

- Currently 83 percent of Virginia registered voters support a policy proposal to provide paid sick days.
- When a worker takes 3.5 unpaid sick days the average family loses a month's worth of groceries.
- Parents without paid sick days are more likely to send their children to school sick.
- More than 80 percent of food industry workers and 75 percent of childcare workers have no paid sick days.
- Employers lose \$160 billion annually in productivity due to "presenteeism" (the practice of coming to work despite illness or injury).
- 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 recent 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 leave disproportionately impacts low-wage workers who are already struggling to make ends meet.
- 15 states have already passed paid sick day standards. Virginia should join them.