



AAUW of Virginia 2022 Legislative Priority Fact Sheet for Members

What: Paid Sick Days

Why it is important:

Too many workers in Virginia are unable to take time off for personal illness because they will not be paid if they do. **Paid sick days legislation is one measure critical to Virginia's economic rebound and stopping the spread of COVID-19 and its variants.** (Another is paid family and medical leave, discussed in a separate paper.) AAUW-VA is a member of the Coalition of Virginians for Paid Sick Days led by the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP), and will be lobbying again this year for legislation providing paid sick days for all Virginia workers.

Status of Legislation:

Last year, Virginia's legislature passed the first paid sick days law - HB 2137 - providing protection for 30,000 home health workers who provide consumer-directed services (Medicaid). This year, there are currently two bills in the House and two bills in the Senate. (A third House bill is expected from Del. Lopez but is not yet listed. An update will be provided.) The following are thumbnail sketches of the bills:

HB 997 (Guzman): Requires employers to provide paid sick leave to home health care workers who provide agency-directed services. (Committee referral pending) (SUPPORT)

HB 851 (Reid): Requires employers to provide 40 hours of paid sick leave, prorated to reflect the average number of hours worked per week for each employee. Bill exempts employers with 25 or fewer employees and part-time employees (SUPPORT WITH RESERVATIONS ABOUT LEVEL OF EMPLOYER SIZE, AND PART-TIME EXEMPTIONS)

SB 352 (Surovell): Requires employers to provide paid sick leave to health care providers, grocery store workers, and home health workers who provide agency-directed services. At the request of the Coalition, Surovell removed any exemption for part-time workers. (referred to Senate Commerce and Labor Committee) (SUPPORT)

SB 642 (Favola): Identical to Guzman's bill (referred to Senate Commerce and Labor Committee) (SUPPORT).

Members of Senate Commerce and Labor Committee: Saslaw (Chair), Norment, Newman, Obenshain, Lucas, Spruill, Edwards, Deeds, Barker, Marsden, Ebbin, Lewis, Surovell, Mason, Bell)

Draft letter or script for telephone call:

For your State Senator:

As your constituent, I am (sending this letter/calling you) on behalf of myself and the 1,000 members of the American Association of University Women in 24 branches in the Commonwealth of Virginia, to urge your support for SB 351 and SB 642 that will require employers to provide paid sick days to more of Virginia's workers.

AAUW of Virginia is committed to achieving equity for women and girls and creating a secure economic future for all Virginians. . Paid sick days legislation is critical to Virginia's economic rebound and stopping the spread of the COVID-19 delta strain. Virginia legislators should pass paid sick days this upcoming session to keep people safe and keep our businesses and schools open.

Paid sick days enable people to stay home when they're sick, preventing the spread of infections and substantial impacts on businesses. Businesses will also benefit from higher employee productivity, healthier workplaces, and lower employee turnover. Studies show that employees working while sick **cost** American businesses approximately \$160 billion per year—and that was before COVID-19.

In 2022, it's time for the legislature to build on that momentum, and provide paid sick days to 1.2 million Virginians who do not have them. A paid sick days policy is extremely popular across Virginia and across party lines: 88% of Virginians support a law requiring five paid sick days per year, according to a Christopher Newport University poll. Now it's time for the legislature to act.

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

For your Delegate: We are currently lobbying for Del. Guzman's bill. The employee threshold in Del. Reid's bill is problematic for the Coalition. If Delegate Reid is your delegate, you may want to thank him for supporting paid sick days for the reasons above without indicating that AAUW-VA supports his bill, at this time. We will update members, as appropriate.

Additional points for use in an email message, phone call or legislative staff discussion:

PROBLEM:

- *Even before COVID-19, approximately 41 percent of private sector workers, 1.2 million people in Virginia, had 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 and their families**

The essential workers during the Coronavirus crisis – the people who stock our shelves, provide health care, and care for children -- are facing serious challenges. 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. Workers and their children need to be able to stay home when they are sick.

- **Public health**

A paid sick days policy will keep Virginians healthy, allowing workers to stay home when they're sick and prevent the spread of Coronavirus. Low-wage workers (foodservice, 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 sick and losing pay or their job.

- **Businesses**

Virginia needs a paid sick days policy to keep our economy running – to ensure businesses can safely reopen and stay open. Without paid sick days, workers go to work sick, infecting others and impacting productivity. Employers lose \$160 billion annually in productivity due to workers 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. And, a 2017 study by the Centers for Disease Control showed that paid sick days could save employers up to \$1.8 billion in reduced absences from flu-like illnesses.

- **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 spread germs to children and teachers, and make it harder for schools to safely reopen.

- **Taxpayers**

Implementing paid sick days will save Virginia taxpayers money with lower health care costs. Workers who do not have paid sick days are 3 times as likely to go to the emergency room for treatment instead of to the doctor's office. This leads to increased health care costs and strain on Virginia's community hospitals.

Link to VICPP Fact Sheet on Paid Sick Leave: <https://www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/VICPP-Paid-Sick-Day-Fact-Sheet-for-2022-GA-8-12-21-FINAL.pdf>