

Testimony of Kira Lewis, RN, BSN on Spokane Paid Sick and Safe Leave proposal

Hi I am Kira Lewis, an RN working as an elementary school nurse. I am here to advocate in **support for at least 5 days of earned sick and safe leave** for workers in Spokane.

In my work, I see children at school who need to go home because they are sick, but who surprisingly tell me they want to stay at school. Too often, their reasoning is that their parent had already asked them that morning if they could just 'tough it out' at school even though they did not feel well, because they could not take a day without pay or worse, they might lose their job. Just this week, I sent a student home sick with a fever and flu like symptoms (kids are supposed to be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school), but he was back in the classroom the very next day, slightly better, but still sick. I was not surprised by this, because the single who dad who raises this young boy and his brother, mentioned to me earlier this year, when I sent his brother home sick, that his boss threatened to fire him if he missed work again. This is just one family and one story.

I could tell you many other accounts of kids going without their medication because they can't see the doctor during normal hours to get a refill prescription, or kids going to the ER for non-emergencies services, because they can't go to their doctor during their parents work hours.

Studies have shown that parents who do **not** have paid sick leave are more than **twice** as likely to send their child to school sick. These parents report the **primary** factor in their decision to stay home with their child or not, is **paid sick leave**.

In the US on average, a parent needs 4 days off work per year, per child, due to their child being sick. But studies also note that children in poorer families are sick more frequently and for a longer duration. Because jobs with **no** sick leave are usually lower paying jobs, you can see that those families have even a greater need for paid sick leave.

I am here to advocate for these families. Because I care about the health of this community and I care deeply about my kiddos at school.

I urge you to pass this ordinance for at least 5 days of earned sick and safe leave for all workers in Spokane. Their kids deserve it.

Thank you for your listening. And thank you for your commitment and care for this community.