



Economic Opportunity Institute

Testimony of Marilyn Watkins, PhD, Economic Opportunity Institute, before the Spokane City Council, January 11, 2016, Paid Sick and Safe Leave

Good evening. I am Marilyn Watkins with the Economic Opportunity Institute and the WA Work and Family Coalition. I am also part of Family Values at Work, a network of coalitions working to modernize paid leave policies in 22 states across the country.

Paid sick leave protects public health, the health and well-being of children and elders, family economic security, and local business prosperity.

Since San Francisco passed paid sick leave in 2006, over 20 additional cities – large and small – and 4 states have adopted sick leave laws.¹

Most people believe that no one should be forced to go to work sick – potentially infecting their coworkers and customers, or when they have a sick child. But although the general public and many individual business owners are enthusiastic supporters, every single sick leave law considered to date has faced opposition from a vocal minority.

You've heard all the typical fears, so I won't repeat them here. But those fears are unfounded.

Studies of sick leave laws to date show:

- Covered economies are equaling or out-performing nearby communities in job and business growth, including in those cities that have set standards of up to 9 days for most businesses.²
- The majority of business owners covered by sick leave standards support those laws. Adjusting to a new policy may be a temporary hassle for some, but for the vast majority of businesses, the laws have no impact on costs, hiring, or location decisions.³
- These laws have succeeded in increasing access to paid leave, especially for low wage workers and women of color, and have made it easier for them to care for their own and their families' health needs.⁴
- Most workers don't use all the paid leave available to them – but some do, and some run out.⁵ Life just does not happen in averages, and working parents with limited leave often choose to go to work sick themselves so they can save limited sick leave for when their kids inevitably get sick. Therefore, a higher standard that provides more days of leave helps working families with minimal impact on business costs.

It's easy to forget about the high cost of not providing sick leave – loss of productivity, more workplace accidents, higher turnover, forcing costly hiring and training of new workers.⁶ Business economists have repeatedly found that "presenteeism" – coming to work sick – costs American businesses more each year than providing sick leave.⁷

The savings from providing sick leave explain why most employers have been able to implement new sick leave policies with minimal impact on business costs, and any adjustment to prices or hours and wages have been small enough not to show up in aggregate statistics.

I urge you to act tonight to pass a strong sick leave law to protect the health and build the economic vibrancy of Spokane.

¹ Localities with paid sick leave laws: WA: Seattle, SeaTac, Tacoma; Portland, OR; CA: San Francisco, Oakland, Emeryville (10,000); NJ: East Orange, Irvington, Jersey City, Newark, Passaic (71,000), Paterson, Trenton, Montclair, Bloomfield (48,000), Elizabeth (125,000), New Brunswick; PA: Philadelphia, Pittsburgh; New York, NY; Washington, DC; Montgomery County, MD. States: Connecticut, California, Massachusetts, Oregon.

² "Implementation and Early Outcomes of the City of Seattle Paid Sick and Safe Time Ordinance," prepared by Jennifer Romich et al, University of Washington, for the Seattle City Auditor, April 2014, http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/CityAuditor/auditreports/PSSTO_ReportSummaryOCAEmail.pdf; Vicky Lovell and Kevin Miller, "Job Growth Strong with Paid Sick Days," October 2008, Institute for Women's Policy Research, http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/B264_JobGrowth.pdf; John Petro, "Paid Sick Leave Does Not Harm Employment," Drum Major Institute, March 2010, <http://drummajorinstitute.org/library/report.php?ID=143>; Office of the District of Columbia Auditor, "Audit of the Accrued Sick and Safe Leave Act of 2008," 2013, <http://dcauditor.org/sites/default/files/DCA092013.pdf>; Eileen Appelbaum, Ruth Mikman, Luke Elliott, and Teresa Kroeger, "Good for Business?: Connecticut's Paid Sick Leave Law," Center for Economic and Policy Research, February 2014, <http://www.cepr.net/documents/good-for-buisness-2014-02-21.pdf>.

³ "Implementation and Early Outcomes of the City of Seattle Paid Sick and Safe Time Ordinance," prepared by Jennifer Romich et al, University of Washington, for the Seattle City Auditor, April 2014, http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/CityAuditor/auditreports/PSSTO_ReportSummaryOCAEmail.pdf; Eileen Appelbaum, Ruth Mikman, Luke Elliott, and Teresa Kroeger, "Good for Business?: Connecticut's Paid Sick Leave Law," Center for Economic and Policy Research, February 2014, <http://www.cepr.net/documents/good-for-buisness-2014-02-21.pdf>; Institute for Women's Policy Research, "San Francisco's Paid Sick Leave Ordinance: Outcomes for Employers and Employees," Robert Drago and Vicky Lovell, February 2011, www.iwpr.org.

⁴ "Implementation and Early Outcomes of the City of Seattle Paid Sick and Safe Time Ordinance," prepared by Jennifer Romich et al, University of Washington, for the Seattle City Auditor, April 2014, http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/CityAuditor/auditreports/PSSTO_ReportSummaryOCAEmail.pdf; Eileen Appelbaum, Ruth Mikman, Luke Elliott, and Teresa Kroeger, "Good for Business?: Connecticut's Paid Sick Leave Law," Center for Economic and Policy Research, February 2014, <http://www.cepr.net/documents/good-for-buisness-2014-02-21.pdf>; Institute for Women's Policy Research, "San Francisco's Paid Sick Leave Ordinance: Outcomes for Employers and Employees," Robert Drago and Vicky Lovell, February 2011, www.iwpr.org.

⁵ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Paid Sick Leave: Prevalence, Provision, and Usage among Full-Time Workers in Private Industry," February 2012, <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/cwc/paid-sick-leave-prevalence-provision-and-usage-among-full-time-workers-in-private-industry.pdf>; Institute for Women's Policy Research, "San Francisco's Paid Sick Leave Ordinance: Outcomes for Employers and Employees," Robert Drago and Vicky Lovell, February 2011, www.iwpr.org; Marilyn Watkins, "Employee Experience with Seattle Paid Sick and Safe Leave," Sept. 2015, <http://www.eoionline.org/work-family/paid-sick-days/employee-experience-with-seattle-paid-sick-and-safe-leave/>.

⁶ Abay Asfaw, Regina Pana-Cryan and Roger Rosa, "Paid Sick Leave and Nonfatal Occupational Injuries," *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 102, No. 9, September 2012: 59-64; Patricia C. Borstorff and Michael B. Marker, "Turnover Drivers and Retention Factors Affecting Hourly Workers: What is Important" *Management Review: An International Journal*, Vol 2, No.1, June 30, 2007, pp. 14-27; University of Missouri Extension, Missouri Small Business and Technology Development Centers, "Reducing Employee Turnover," website viewed April 4, 2011, http://www.missouribusiness.net/sbtdc/docs/reducing_employee_turnover.asp.

⁷ Paul Hemp, Presenteeism: At Work – But Out of It," *Harvard Business Review*, Oct 2004, <https://hbr.org/2004/10/presenteeism-at-work-but-out-of-it>; Goetzel, et al, Health, Absence, Disability, and Presenteeism Cost Estimates of Certain Physical and Mental Health Conditions Affecting U.S. Employers," *American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, April 2004, http://go.nationalpartnership.org/site/DocServer/Presenteeism_Cornell_Study.pdf.