



New Jersey Time to Care Coalition

Email: info@njtimetocare.org

Website: www.njtimetocare.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 27, 2014

Contact: **Dena Mottola Jaborska**, dena@njcitizenaction.org, 609-540-6609 (cell)

Earned Sick and Safe Days Legislation Passes the Assembly Labor Committee

Trenton – Today the New Jersey Assembly Labor Committee passed A2354, the Earned Sick and Safe Days Legislation by a vote of 6 - 3. The Time to Care Coalition and its over 100 member groups applauded the Assembly Labor Committee members, bill sponsor Assemblywoman Pam Lampitt and Speaker Prieto for their unwavering position to provide job-protected, paid time from work. Other Assembly members have lent their support as well, including co-sponsors Assemblyman Diegnan, Assemblyman Benson, Assemblyman Mukherji, Assemblywoman Jasey and Assemblyman Garcia.

“By advancing a strong bill that maintains coverage for all workers in the state, these Assembly leaders have shown their willingness to stand firmly behind New Jersey’s working families,” **said Phyllis Salowe - Kaye Executive Director, New Jersey Citizen Action and spokesperson for the New Jersey Time to Care Coalition.** She continued, “Opponents of this bill are working hard to weaken this bill and to create barriers to workers accessing their earned sick time when they need it. We will be working closely with leaders and sponsors of both houses to ensure New Jersey adopts an earned sick day policy that remains strong and accessible to workers as it makes its way to final passage.”

The legislation will allow all New Jersey workers to earn one hour of sick time for every 30 hours worked; workers in establishments with 10 or more employees will be able to earn a required standard of 9 paid sick days per year; workers in establishment with fewer than 10 employees will earn a required minimum of 5 paid sick days per year. Businesses that have paid time off and vacation time policies that are provided in the same amounts and that can be used for the same purposes and under the same conditions as under the proposed earned sick days law wouldn’t have to change their policies.

“Getting sick should never mean getting fired in the state of New Jersey,” **said Analilia Mejia, executive director for New Jersey Working Families.** “New Jersey municipalities have made great strides this past summer in ensuring New Jersey workers aren't faced with the terrible choice between their family's health and its livelihood. We thank the committee for taking the first step towards a strong and comprehensive bill that would ensure all workers across our state are afforded the same opportunity to care for themselves and their family when illness strikes.”

Two states, California and Connecticut, six New Jersey cities and another eight cities around the nation have adopted earned sick days laws. Two New Jersey towns, Trenton and Montclair, are poised to adopt a policy by ballot referendum this November 4th. Massachusetts voters are also expected to approve a ballot question this November to adopt a statewide earned sick days policy.

Safiyah Amina Mohammad, an advocate and mother of children with special needs, voiced her support for earned sick days by saying, “I have been forced to go to work sick and send my kids to school sick because I did not have paid sick days. It made me uncomfortable knowing how my illness could impact others, but you have no choice when you depend on keeping your job and your paycheck. Passing earned sick days means working families can be both good parents and good workers.

“We cannot advocate strongly enough for enactment of A2354, which would permit working caregivers the opportunity to take care of their families responsibly without sacrificing their income or their jobs,” **said Marilyn Askin, Chief Legislative Advocate for AARP New Jersey.** “Workplace leave policies must keep pace with changing demographics -- the increased longevity of older adults requiring eldercare, administered primarily by working women.”

"Without a sick leave policy for their parents, our students' health is at risk," **said Wendell Steinhauer, President of New Jersey Education Association.** "Our children deserve better. Parents belong with their children when they are sick. They shouldn't have to choose between their child and their job."

"Listen to your doctors -- earned sick time is an open-and-shut public health issue," **said Dr. Darnell Brown, New Jersey Vice President for the Committee of Interns and Residents-SEIU.** "When you're sick you should stay home and take care of yourself. If you're really sick, you should come see a doctor. If your child is sick, you shouldn't need to worry whether you can afford to take care of him or her. Working families don't just need this peace of mind when it's cold and flu season or when some exotic illness is in the news -- they need it throughout the year. That's why we need this bill."

"We're glad the Assembly Labor Committee voted to move this crucial piece of legislation despite the doomsday predictions of the business lobby," **said New Jersey Policy Perspective policy analyst Brandon McKoy.** "Like us, legislators recognize that they've heard these arguments before, any time they have tried to provide basic measures of economic security to workers on New Jersey's lowest rungs. But stale arguments don't change the bottom line: Enacting a statewide earned sick days policy – in addition to being the right thing to do for the state's workers and public health –will help, not hurt, New Jersey's economy."

"Being able to provide earned sick days to employees is more about keeping them healthy and happy and has very little to do with dollars and cents," **said Tony Sandkamp, owner of Sandkamp Woodworks in Jersey City New Jersey.** "My employees are the ones who keep my business going. I need people to work at their best every day. If they are sick and feel financial pressure to come into work, they are much more likely to make a mistake or potentially hurt themselves-- and that isn't good for business. The momentum is growing for economy boosting policies like earned sick days. It's great that New Jersey is considering passing this piece of legislation as state law."

New Jersey Time to Care Coalition is a broad-based group of community, advocacy, union, religious, research, and academic organizations working to support policies that strengthen communities by ensuring that working families can balance their responsibilities at home and on the job.

#####