

PAID SICK TIME

An Essential Benefit for All of Minnesota's Workers

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NO WORKER SHOULD HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN A PAYCHECK AND THEIR HEALTH.

Issue Statement

Paid sick time is an essential benefit for all workers in Minnesota. Paid sick time is an economic issue, a public health issue, and an equity issue. Workers should not have to choose between going to work sick or losing a day of pay. Low wage workers, women, Black, Indigenous, people of color, and people living in rural areas are least likely to work at jobs that provide paid sick time. Three cities in Minnesota have implemented paid sick time for workers, along with twelve States and the District of Columbia. It is time for Minnesota to act now and implement a statewide mandatory paid sick time policy.

Understanding the Problem

The [Economic Policy Institute](#) found that missing even a half day of work can mean a family is giving up one month's worth of spending on fruits and vegetables, and being gone two days is a whole month of gas. A whole week of work can amount to an entire month of rent or a mortgage payment.¹

Paid sick time is a public health issue for all Minnesotans and has been brought to light during the COVID19 pandemic. Millions of families have faced unnecessary financial hardship and have gone to work sick with COVID19 because they did not have a choice to stay home. No worker should have to make the difficult choice of going to work sick to avoid the risk of losing their job and to avoid a loss of income or staying home to care for themselves or a sick family member.

"It sends a message to the worker that they are a machine and not in fact human beings with lives and inherent worth".

Adeline Wright, Owner of Adeline, Inc., Duluth

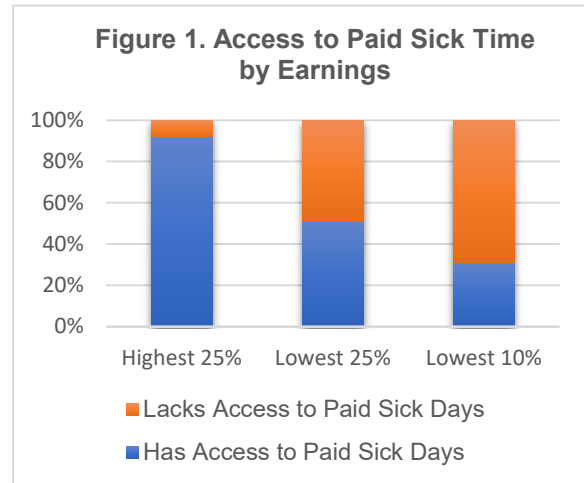
Minnesota's employers rely on their employees to perform to their full potential. This requires workers to be healthy. That is why many business owners advocate for statewide paid sick time. When workers show up to work sick, employers see a loss of productivity and a risk of spreading infection. Whether their employers require them to show up to work sick or they cannot afford to take time off, everyone loses. Paid Sick Time is good for workers, employers, and the community.

Business owners, community members and policy makers provided [testimony](#) in support of an earned paid sick time statewide policy. Nelsie Yang, a St. Paul City Council Member, spoke about her vivid memories as a child, growing up with refugee parents who did not have paid sick time. ***"To me this is really personal when we are talking about folks in our communities who need earned sick and safe time and don't have it."***

Unequal Access to Paid Sick Time

Paid sick time is one step towards leveling the playing field for all workers, particularly low-wage workers, women, and people of color.

LOW WAGE WORKERS. People working for low wages are doing jobs that keep the economy running. This became quite evident during the pandemic with low-wage workers in retail, health care, education, and the personal care industry deemed essential workers — yet many denied the benefit of paid sick time. [Figure 1](#) illustrates the disparity in paid sick time access by income level. 90% of the highest paid workers (top 25%) have access to paid sick time. Only 30% of the lowest paid workers (bottom 10%) received the same sick pay benefit.² Not only are wages a determining factor, the type of [occupation](#) impacts access. Construction, farming, and service industry workers have the least access to paid sick time.²

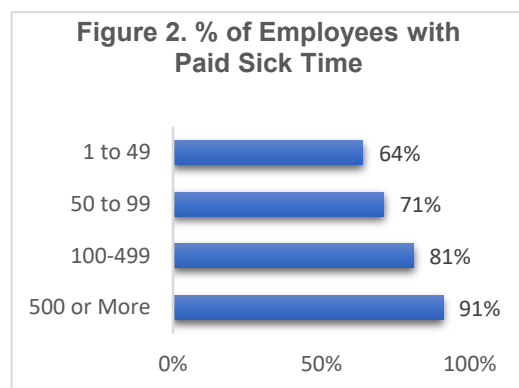


RACE AND GENDER also predict access to paid sick time. Despite access to paid sick time being roughly equivalent between men and women workers, there are disparities by race/ethnicity.⁸ [Table 1](#) shows the access to paid sick time by gender and race/ethnicity.⁶

Population Group	Access to Paid Sick Time by %		
	Men	Women	Total
Total	60%	60%	60%
White	64%	61%	63%
Hispanic	45%	49%	46%
Black	59%	64%	62%
Asian	67%	67%	67%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	n/a	n/a	53%
Other	67%	65%	66%

SMALLER BUSINESSES are least likely to offer paid sick time. Only 64% of employers with 1 to 49 employees provide a paid sick time benefit; compared to 91% of employers with 500 or more employees that provide a paid sick time benefit (Figure 2).²

GEOGRAPHY matters. 91% of workers living on the Pacific Coast have access to paid sick time, compared to East South Central and East North Central States where only 67% have access to paid sick time.² Workers living in rural areas have less access to paid sick time. According to the [2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce \(NSCW\)](#) data more than 4 in 10 rural workers lack paid sick time. These same workers also tend to have limited resources, fewer employment options, and face more employment barriers than those in urban areas.



Efforts in Minnesota

In 2015, the Minnesota Department of Health, Center for Health Equity presented a [White Paper on Paid Leave and Health](#) to the Minnesota Legislature documenting the need and benefits of paid sick time. The Minnesota Legislature has heard Paid Sick Time bills going as far back as 2007 when the [Healthy Families, Healthy Workplaces Act](#) was first introduced. This bill mandated that employers provide 1 hour of paid sick time per 40 hours worked for employers with 10+ employees and 1 hour per 80 hours worked for employers with fewer than 10 employees. Every session since, comparable legislation has been introduced. The Minnesota House passed the [Earned Sick and Safe Time](#) bill for the first time during the 2019-2020 legislative session but it failed to move in the Minnesota Senate.

Minnesota currently has a patchwork quilt of policies that protect workers in the urban centers of Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth (Table 2), while workers throughout most of Minnesota lack guaranteed access to paid sick time, resulting in geographic disparity.

Minneapolis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Earn 1 hour per 30 hours worked up to 48 hours per year. ▪ Accrual begins on the first day of employment and earned time can be used after 90 days of employment. ▪ There is no limit on amount of earned sick time used per year. ▪ Applies to employers with 5+ employees; employers with fewer than 5 employees must provide equivalent unpaid time off. ▪ Exemptions include county, state, or federal employees, independent contractors, and workers who work fewer than 80 hours per year.
St. Paul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Same provisions as Minneapolis, except: Applies to all employers, regardless of size.
Duluth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Earn 1 hour per 30 hours worked up to 64 hours per year. ▪ Accrual begins on the first day of employment and earned time can be used after 90 days of employment. ▪ Can use up to 40 hours of earned sick time per year. ▪ Applies to employers with 5+ employees. ▪ Exemptions include government employers, independent contractors, student interns, and seasonal employees.

Efforts Across the Country

In 2006, San Francisco was the first city in the U.S. to enact an ordinance mandating paid sick time, with Connecticut the first state (in 2011). Since then, [12 more states](#), and Washington D.C. have enacted statewide paid sick time, leaving Minnesota falling behind.⁴

[Connecticut](#), which has the strictest policy with regard to employers and employees covered, found that paid sick time did not lead to substantial cost increases for employers or consumers. Workers begin to accrue time on the first day of work and can use that time after working 680 hours. The rate of accrual is 1 hour of paid sick time for every 40 hours worked with a cap at 40 hours. There was minimal impact on costs, most often 2% or less, and few employers have made adjustments such as increasing prices or reducing employee hours. Between 2011 and 2014, Connecticut experienced a 9.1% job growth rate in the hospitality industry, surpassing the rest of the United States.⁹

Despite many variations, [Paid Sick Time](#) policies have been demonstrated to benefit employers, workers and families, and communities as a whole.^{3,7}

- **EMPLOYERS** see improved recruitment, retention, and morale of employees; decrease in loss labor time/increase of productivity; and reduction in employer healthcare cost.
- **WORKERS** see a reduction in on-the-job injuries; faster recovery from illness; and an increase in use of preventative care for themselves and their families.
- **COMMUNITIES** see a reduction in the spread of illnesses and a decrease in public health cost.

Policy Position Statement

PAID SICK TIME IS AN ECONOMIC ISSUE, A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE, AND AN EQUITY ISSUE.³

Paid sick time is an essential benefit for all workers in Minnesota. Workers should not have to choose between going to work sick or losing a day of pay. Three cities in Minnesota have implemented paid sick time for workers, along with twelve states and the District of Columbia. It is time for Minnesota to act by implementing a statewide mandatory paid sick time policy.

For these reasons, we recommend that Minnesota enact legislation that:

- Guarantees earned sick time for all workers.
- Workers earn 1 hour of paid sick time per 30 hours worked, accruing up to 48 hours per year.
- Workers be eligible to use paid sick time when they are ill or to care for a family member who is ill.
- Eligible sick time include paid time for medical, dental, and mental health care appointments.
- Provide employers with tax incentives to offset additional expenses.

To access this and other policy advocacy briefs online go to: <http://link.mnsu.edu/mswbriefs>

References

Click on the underlined text to link directly to the sources.

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