

MILWAUKEE PAID SICK DAYS ORDINANCE

Ordinance to require Milwaukee employers to provide paid sick days to employees.

Be it ordained by the People of the City of Milwaukee:

Section 1. Legislative Findings and Purpose

A large number of workers in the City of Milwaukee do not have paid sick days available to them. This problem is most prevalent among part-time employees but also is widespread among full-time employees working in many sectors of the local economy. The problem is greatest among workers toward the lower end of the economic spectrum, although it is by no means limited to such workers and affects many middle-income workers as well as higher-income workers. Further, a large number of workers who have paid sick days available to them do not have an adequate number of hours of such leave to reasonably meet their needs. Even more of these workers are not allowed to use what paid sick days they have for the care of a family member.

The absence or inadequacy of paid sick days among workers in Milwaukee poses serious problems not only for affected workers but also for their families, their employers, the health care system, and the community as a whole. Among these problems are the following:

1. When workers have no paid sick days or an inadequate amount available to them, they are more likely to come to work when they are sick. Working when sick is often counterproductive from a health standpoint, because it may cause the employee's condition to worsen or may delay the employee's recovery, thus compounding the hardship to the employee and his or her family caused by the illness. In addition, the employee's job productivity is likely to suffer if he or she is working while sick or injured.
2. Employees who come to work when they are sick may expose other employees to infectious diseases, such as the flu. When that occurs, some of the employees who have been exposed will also become ill, which not only creates hardships for those workers and their families but also increases costs to the health care system and undermines job productivity.
3. In those industries where workers have substantial contact with customers, or with certain goods that come into contact with customers, such as food, there is a risk that a sick worker will jeopardize the health of members of the public by exposing them, directly or indirectly, to germs and disease.
4. When workers do not have paid sick days or an adequate amount of paid sick days available to them, they are more likely to come to work notwithstanding the medical problems facing their children or other family members. When that occurs, ill or injured family members may

not receive the care, attention, and medical assistance necessary to aid their recovery. Their health problems consequently may intensify or be prolonged, because it often will take longer for them to recover when responsible adult family members are not able to care for them at home or take them to medical appointments.

5. A worker who has no paid sick days or an inadequate amount to take time off to care for a sick child may send the child, even though sick, to school or a child care center, thereby exposing other children to germs and disease. Inevitably, some children thus exposed will become ill due to their close proximity to and interactions with the sick child. Equally problematic, a worker may keep an older child home from school to care for a younger ill sibling.
6. Without adequate paid sick days, working parents who must stay home when they, their children, or other family members are ill or injured lose earnings and may risk a loss of employment, thereby placing the family's economic security in jeopardy and increasing the likelihood that taxpayer-funded sources will have to be used to provide for the family's needs.
7. Without adequate paid sick days, it is much more difficult for workers to schedule medical appointments for themselves and their children and other family members. As a result, routine medical appointments that can prevent the onset of illness or injury are often not scheduled; and medical appointments to treat an existing illness or injury are not scheduled, or are scheduled only after the illness or injury has become acute. When medical care is sacrificed in the short run, medical costs increase in the long run. Hospitalization of patients, with its attendant costs, sometimes becomes necessary because preventive health measures were not taken earlier.
8. Without adequate paid sick days, it is much more difficult for workers to care for family members on a short-term basis. As a result, it sometimes becomes necessary for family members to be placed in nursing homes, thereby increasing nursing care costs.

The foregoing problems are particularly serious for single-parent households. The unavailability or inadequacy of paid sick leave hits women and people of color in the Milwaukee workforce particularly hard, but no demographic or ethnic group is spared from hardship when sick leave is unavailable or inadequate. To safeguard the public welfare, health, safety, and prosperity of Milwaukee, it is essential that all persons working in our community be able to earn paid sick days that

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are adequate to ensure a decent and healthy life for them and their families. Ensuring the adequacy of paid sick days for employees in Milwaukee will ensure a more stable workforce in our community and thereby benefit not only workers and their families but employers and the community as a whole. It is in the interest of all Milwaukeeans to require that employers benefiting from the opportunity to do business here make available to their employees a reasonable number of paid sick days. Implementation of this policy serves the public interest and constitutes a significant public benefit.

Section 2. Definitions

For purposes of this Chapter:

- (a) "City" is as defined in Chapter 1 of the Milwaukee City Charter.
- (b) "Employee" is any person who is employed within the geographic boundaries of the City by an employer, including part-time and temporary employees.
- (c) "Employer" is as defined in Wis. Stat. Section 104.01(3)(a). For purposes of this Chapter, "employer" does not include (1) the United States government; (2) the State of Wisconsin including any office, department, agency, authority, institution, association, society or other body of the State including the legislature and the judiciary; or (3) any county or local government.
- (d) "Family member" is defined as:
 - (1) a child as defined in Wis. Stat. Section 103.10(1)(a);
 - (2) a parent as defined in Wis. Stat. Section 103.10(1)(f);
 - (3) a person to whom the employee is legally married under the laws of Wisconsin;
 - (4) a grandparent defined as the parent of a parent or spouse of a grandparent;
 - (5) a grandchild defined as the child of a child;
 - (6) a biological, foster, or adopted sibling or spouse of a biological, foster or adopted sibling;
 - (7) a domestic partner as defined in Section 111-3 of the Milwaukee Municipal Code; and
 - (8) any other individual related by blood or affinity whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship.
- (e) "Small business" means any private individual, firm, partnership, institution, corporation, or association for which fewer than 10 persons work for compensation during a given week. In determining the number of persons performing work for compensation during a given week, all persons performing work for compensation on a full-time, part-time, or temporary basis shall be counted, including persons made available to work through the services of a temporary services or staffing agency or

similar entity. In situations in which the number of persons who work for compensation per week fluctuates above and below 10 or more per week over the course of a year, business size will be determined for the current calendar year based upon the average number of persons who worked for compensation per week during the preceding calendar year.

- (f) "Paid sick leave" means leave that is compensated at the same hourly rate as the employee earns from his or her employment and is provided by an employer to an employee for the purposes described in Section 3 of this Chapter.
- (g) "Domestic abuse" is as defined in Wis. Stat. Section 968.075(1)(a).
- (h) "Sexual assault" is as defined in Wis. Stat. Section 940.225.
- (i) "Stalking" means engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to (1) fear for his or her safety or the safety of others; or (2) suffer substantial emotional distress.
- (j) "Retaliatory personnel action" means the discharge, suspension, or demotion by an employer of an employee or any other adverse employment action.

Section 3. Accrual of paid sick leave

- (a) All employees have the right to paid sick leave as provided in this Chapter.
- (b) All employers shall provide a minimum of one hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked by an employee. Employers will not be required under this section to provide more than 72 hours of sick leave for an employee in a calendar year.
- (c) Employees of small businesses will not accrue more than 40 hours of paid sick leave in a calendar year, unless the employer selects a higher limit.
- (d) Employees who are exempt from requirements under Section 13(a)(1) of the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act with respect to payment of overtime will be assumed to work 40 hours in each work week for purposes of paid sick leave accrual unless their regular work week is less than 40 hours, in which case paid sick leave accrues based upon that regular work week.
- (e) Paid sick leave shall accrue in hour unit increments.
- (f) Paid sick leave as provided in this section shall begin to accrue at the commencement of employment.
- (g) Employees shall be entitled to use accrued paid sick leave beginning on the 90th calendar day following commencement of their employment. After the 90th calendar day of employment, employees may use sick leave as it is accrued.

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- (h) Paid sick leave shall be carried over to the following calendar year; however, an employee's use of sick leave provided under this Act in each calendar year shall not exceed 40 hours for employees of small businesses and 72 hours for employees of all other businesses.
- (i) Any employer with a paid leave policy, such as a paid time off policy, who makes available an amount of paid leave sufficient to meet the accrual requirements of this Chapter that may be used for the same purposes and under the same conditions as paid sick leave under this Chapter is not required to provide additional paid sick leave.
- (j) Nothing in this Chapter shall be construed to prevent employers from adopting or retaining leave policies that are more generous than the policies required under this Chapter.
- (k) Nothing in this Chapter shall be construed as requiring financial or other reimbursement to an employee from an employer upon the employee's termination, resignation, retirement, or other separation from employment for accrued paid sick leave that has not been used.
- (l) When there is a separation from employment and the employee is rehired within one year of separation by the same employer, previously accrued paid sick leave that had not been used shall be reinstated. Further, the employee shall be entitled to use accrued paid sick leave at the commencement of employment following a separation from employment of one year or less.

Section 4. Use of paid sick leave

- (a) Paid sick leave shall be provided to an employee by an employer for:
 - (1) An employee's mental or physical illness, injury or health condition or need for medical diagnosis, care, or treatment of a mental or physical illness, injury or health condition or need for preventive medical care;
 - (2) Care of a family member with a mental or physical illness, injury or health condition who needs medical diagnosis, care, or treatment of a mental or physical illness, injury or health condition or who needs preventive medical care;
 - (3) Absence necessary due to domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking, provided the leave is to:
 - (A) Seek medical attention for the employee or employee's child, spouse, parent, grandparent or extended family member to recover from physical or psychological injury or disability caused by domestic or sexual violence; or
 - (B) Obtain services from a victim services organization; or

- (C) Obtain psychological or other counseling; or
- (D) Seek relocation due to the domestic or sexual violence or stalking; or
- (E) Take legal action, including preparing for or participating in any civil or criminal legal proceeding related to or resulting from the domestic or sexual violence.

- (b) An employer may not require, as a condition of an employee's taking paid sick leave, that the employee search for or find a replacement worker to cover the hours during which the employee is on paid sick leave.
- (c) An employer may not impose unreasonable barriers to use of paid sick leave or require unreasonable documentation of illness when an employee takes sick leave.
- (d) An employer may not penalize an employee for use of sick leave by reducing any benefits of employment otherwise due the employee.

Section 5. Exercise of rights protected; Retaliation prohibited

- (a) An employer or any other person shall not interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of, or the attempt to exercise, any right protected under this Chapter.
- (b) An employer shall not take retaliatory personnel action or discriminate against an employee because the employee has exercised rights protected under this Chapter. Such rights include but are not limited to the right to use paid sick leave pursuant to this Chapter; the right to file a complaint or inform any person about any employer's alleged violation of this Chapter; and the right to inform any person of his or her potential rights under this Chapter.
- (c) No employer may treat sick leave taken under this chapter as an absence that may lead to or result in discipline, discharge, demotion, suspension or any other adverse action, or treat the use of paid sick leave guaranteed under this chapter as a negative factor in hiring, evaluation or promotion.
- (d) Protections of this section shall apply to any person who mistakenly but in good faith alleges violations of this Chapter.

Section 6. Notice and Posting

- (a) Employers shall give notice that employees are entitled to paid sick leave, the amount of paid sick leave, and the terms of its use guaranteed under this Chapter and that retaliation against employees who request or use paid sick leave is prohibited.
- (b) Employers may comply with this section by supplying each of their employees with a notice in English, Hmong and

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Spanish that contains the information required in (1).

- (c) Employers may comply with this section by displaying a poster in a conspicuous and accessible place in each establishment where such employees are employed which contains in English, Hmong and Spanish all information required under (1).

Section 7. Employer Records

Employers shall retain records documenting hours worked by employees and paid sick leave taken by employees, for a period of five years.

Section 8. Enforcement

- (a) The Equal Rights Commission established under Chapter 109 shall have all authority granted to it to enforce the provisions of this Chapter. The Equal Rights Commission shall exercise all authority granted under Section 109-15(4) with respect to violations of this Chapter including but not limited to the power to receive complaints, remedy violations, adopt rules, issue subpoenas and order redress following a hearing regarding violation of this Chapter.
- (b) The Equal Rights Commission shall use the procedures outlined in Section 109-17 in acting on complaints concerning violations of this Chapter.
- (c) Any party aggrieved by failure to act on a complaint filed or by the decision of an administrative law judge pursuant to the procedures outlined in Section 109-17 may seek review as outlined in Section 109-21 within the time limits and pursuant to the procedure outlined in that section.
- (d) In the event the Equal Rights Commission is abolished or reconstituted and its authority transferred to a successor entity, the successor entity shall have full authority to enforce the provisions of this Chapter.
- (e) In the event the Equal Rights Commission, due to lack of funding or staffing, is unable to enforce the provisions of this Chapter, any agency enforcing rights protected under Chapter 109 shall also have full authority to enforce the provisions of this Chapter.

Section 9. Confidentiality and Nondisclosure

An employer may not require disclosure of information relating to domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking or the details of an employee's medical condition as a condition of providing paid sick leave under this Chapter. If an employer possesses health information or information pertaining to domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking about an employee

or employee's child, parent, spouse, extended family member or other individual described in section 3, such information shall be treated as confidential and not disclosed except to the affected employee or with the permission of the affected employee.

Section 10. Encouragement of more generous leave policies; no effect on more generous policies

- (a) Nothing in this Chapter shall be construed to discourage or prohibit an employer from the adoption or retention of a paid leave policy more generous than the one required herein.
- (b) Nothing in this Chapter shall be construed as diminishing the obligation of an employer to comply with any contract, collective bargaining agreement, employment benefit plan or other agreement providing more generous leave to an employee than required herein.
- (c) Nothing in this Chapter shall be construed as diminishing the rights of public employees regarding paid sick leave or use of sick leave.

Section 11. Other Legal Requirements

This Chapter provides minimum requirements pertaining to paid sick leave and shall not be construed to preempt, limit, or otherwise affect the applicability of any other law, regulation, requirement, policy, or standard that provides for greater accrual or use by employees of sick leave, whether paid or unpaid, or that extends other protections to employees.

Section 12. Preemption

Nothing in this Chapter shall be interpreted or applied so as to create any power or duty in conflict with Federal or State law.

Section 13. Severability

If any provision of this Chapter or application thereof to any person or circumstance is judged invalid, the invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of the Chapter which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this Chapter are declared severable.

Section 14. Effective date

This ordinance shall be effective upon publication as provided in Wis. Stat. Section 9.20(7). Implementation of all provisions of this ordinance shall be accomplished no later than 90 days following publication.