

# **PAID SICK DAYS MILWAUKEE**

**NEWS ADVISORY**  
July 17, 2008

**Contact:** Sangita Nayak  
9to5 Milwaukee Organizer  
414-274-0920

## **Milwaukeeans Testify For Paid Sick Time at Common Council** Certified Paid Sick Petitions Move Paid Sick Days to Judicial and Legislative Committee

### **WHAT:**

9to5 Milwaukee and the entire Paid Sick Day Milwaukee coalition are moving an effort to establish paid sick days as a minimum right. Forty-two thousand Milwaukeeans signed a petition to move this forward. The petitions were certified by the City Clerk, and now the Common Council has 30 days to either pass the referendum or put it on the November ballot. The council's Judiciary and Legislation Committee will take testimony on July 21, 2008 at 1:30PM.

### **WHO:**

9to5, National Association of Working Women  
Peter Blewett, MPS  
Theresa Thomas-Boyd, Citizen Action  
Sheila Cochran, AFL-CIO (invited)  
Dr. Pat McManus, Black Health Coalition President  
Jayme Montgomery, Campaign Against Violence

### **WHERE:**

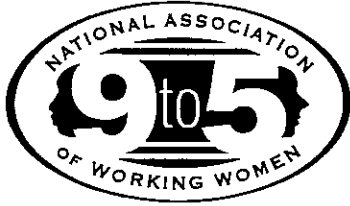
City Hall, 301B

### **WHEN:**

Monday, July 21, 1:30PM

### **Visual:**

Signs, T-shirts, and kids.



---

## **9to5, National Association of Working Women**

207 East Buffalo Street, Suite 211, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

• (414) 274-0925 • Fax (414) 272-2870 • [www.9to5.org](http://www.9to5.org) • [9to5@9to5.org](mailto:9to5@9to5.org)



### **Lisa Craig, 9to5 Milwaukee Member**

**Press Contact: 274-0923**

Hi, my name is Lisa Craig and I live on 1421 N. 37<sup>th</sup> Street, in Alderman Hines's district. I have been actively involved in the work for paid sick time and I gathered signatures to put this issue before you and on the November ballot.

I understand paid sick time is important, both from what I remember as a child as well as through my current experience as a mother. As a child I can remember one time I was in the hospital for a couple of days and my mother lost her job because she had to care for me.

Now as a mother myself, I have had similar experiences with my three children. My eight year-old son has asthma and I have had to go to the hospital various times with him. In my last job, I had a problem getting time off and instead got written discipline when my son was sick. Almost every job I've held, I didn't have sick time.

Managing a job and three kids who can get sick like any other kids, I have realized low-wage jobs and W-2 placements haven't had the basic benefits that make work possible for women. My mother's generation needed sick time, my generation needs paid sick time, and I know the next generation will have sick time because we're going to make this a basic right during my working life.





## 9to5, National Association of Working Women

207 East Buffalo Street, Suite 211, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

• (414) 274-0925 • Fax (414) 272-2870 • [www.9to5.org](http://www.9to5.org) • [9to5@9to5.org](mailto:9to5@9to5.org)



### **LAWRENCE GRIFFIN, MILWAUKEEAN AND 9TO5 PAID SICK DAY ACTIVIST** **Press Contact: 274-0923**

I worked at a local grocery store for three years. I didn't have paid sick time and couldn't give notice when my child had asthma attacks. But I had to be there, because he's my son. I faced written warnings, but I shouldn't have had to choose. That's why I support a minimum right to paid sick days.

Milwaukee ranks as the "fifth most challenging place to live with asthma" and an estimated 30,000 children in Milwaukee County have asthma.\* People of color, the central city, and the uninsured face higher asthma hospitalization rates. Among those hospitalized, 66 percent are covered by Medicaid or Wisconsin BadgerCare or are uninsured.\*

The majority of those hospitalized for asthma in Milwaukee live below the poverty level.\* Low-wage earners are the least likely to have paid sick days. Workers face job discipline for care of an asthmatic child, from a verbal warning to a job termination.

On any given day, a family in Milwaukee is faced with an impossible choice: the well-being of a sick child or keeping a job to put food on the table. Nearly half of all workers in this nation lack paid sick days & for low wage workers it 3 out of 4.

All workers should have a minimum standard of paid sick time for themselves and their families. This basic right would enable a parent to care for an asthmatic child & keep their job!

*\* Asthma statistics are from Fight Asthma Milwaukee, [www.pediatricasthma.org](http://www.pediatricasthma.org)*





## 9to5, National Association of Working Women

207 East Buffalo Street, Suite 211, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

• (414) 274-0925 • Fax (414) 272-2870 • [www.9to5.org](http://www.9to5.org) • [9to5@9to5.org](mailto:9to5@9to5.org)



### Testimony Before the Milwaukee Common Council

Ellen Bravo

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

414-536-8665

July 21, 2008

*"This bill would create chaos in business never yet known to us....It sets an all time high in crackpot legislation. Let me make it very clear that I am not opposed to the social theory.... No decent American citizen can take exception to this.... What I do take exception to is any approach to a solution of this problem which is utterly impractical and in operation would be much more destructive than constructive to the very purposes which it is designed to serve."*

You may think this quote comes from Tim Sheehy of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce in opposition to the ordinance guaranteeing a minimum number of paid sick days for employees in Milwaukee. Actually, the author was Representative Arthur Phillip Lamneck (D-OH) arguing more than 70 years ago (November 1937) against the proposed law to abolish child labor and to establish a minimum wage. Those minimum standards did not destroy the American economy—neither did the Family and Medical Leave Act, and neither will sick days.

Twenty years ago 9to5 helped lead a coalition to win a state family leave law. Tim Sheehy argued then that there was no need for such a bill because employers were already "taking care" of their employees. In addition, he and other opponents claimed, requiring a floor on family leave would lead business to flee and render our state uncompetitive – costing jobs and hurting the very people we wanted to help.

We were successful in 1988, and as a result of passage here and in a number of other states, the FMLA became the law of the land. In 1995, I served on a bipartisan Commission on Leave appointed by Congress to study the impact of the law on employers and employees. Here's what we found: All employers weren't "taking care" of their workers. Two-thirds of all covered firms had to change their policy because they were not yet providing the range of leave required by the law. We also found that the measure had a positive or neutral effect on profits and growth.

The FMLA was a big step forward, but it does not cover routine illness. Fortunately, most kids don't get leukemia but they do all get colds and stomach flu. Health officials ask parents not to go to work sick or send their children to school sick. School officials insist parents pick up a child who becomes ill at school. Parents are required to get children immunized; students are suspended if their parents don't comply. Yet half the workforce, and three-fourths of low-wage workers, could lose not only a day's pay but their job simply for complying with these rules.



Children aren't the only ones at risk. Every one of us is likely to be served flu with our soup, given that seven out of eight food service workers lack paid sick days.

Taxpayers also pay a price. A study by the Urban Institute found that low-wage workers with more than two years job tenure were no more likely to receive paid sick days than those who worked less than a year. Recent welfare recipients fared the worst. There is broad agreement that work must pay. But work can't pay if it doesn't last – and it can't last if it jeopardizes kids.

Mr. Sheehy argues that small businesses can't afford to replace certain key employees. This is why a reasonable sick days policy makes good business sense. Refusing an employee sick time forces businesses to replace workers on a permanent basis, an expensive proposition. Studies show the cost of hiring and training a new salaried employee to be 150 percent of compensation. Replacing even an \$8 an hour worker costs more than \$5500 each. As one manager put it, "It's all about retention. It's very costly to find people and train them and have them understand how you do business. When we train people, we want them to stay."

Best practice employers already provide paid sick time because they know the benefits to the bottom line as well as to workers and their families. According to a 2001 study published in the *Journal of Managerial Issues*, offering workers the option of taking time off when a family member is sick affects profits positively.

In addition, a Cornell study states that "presenteeism" - employees coming to work even though they are ill, which poses potential problems of contagion and lower productivity – costs \$180 billion annually in lost productivity and may well cost more than absenteeism due to illness.

Business leaders in Milwaukee should follow the lead of Dan Scherotter, Vice President of the Golden Gate Restaurant Association. "To be honest," he told a public radio reporter, "if we fight it (paid sick days), we look like complete jerks."

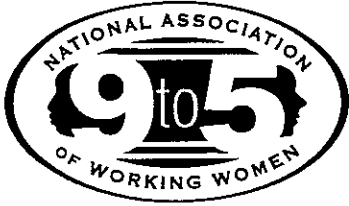
A minimum standard regarding paid sick days will level the playing field, boost productivity and profits, improve individual and public health, add to the chances of success for our children, add dignity to the aging population. As a city, we must ensure that family values don't end at the workplace door.

I coordinate a national network of state coalitions working to win paid sick days and other policies that value families at work. Milwaukee's proposal is part of a national movement working to bring our labor standards in sync with the realities of today's workforce and the values of the public. In every coalition we have participation by business owners who understand that this is good for their bottom line – and the right thing to do.

Here's an example from Lance LaFave in Newton, MA, a distributor of bathroom products with five employees: "We decided to provide paid sick days for several reasons, but the most important is that we felt it would be morally wrong to not provide something so basic. We also believe that it benefits our company in a number of ways. It helps with employee loyalty and retention, it minimizes the risk of contracting illness, and we need our employees healthy, rested, and efficient, not dragging when they come to work because they can't afford to miss a day's

pay. I can say first hand that the benefits exceed the costs....This [measure] would put all businesses on the same playing field and ensure that many in our workforce don't have to choose between their health and putting food on their table."

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your passing this ordinance or passing it on to the voters of our city.



---

## **9to5, National Association of Working Women**

207 East Buffalo Street, Suite 211, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

• (414) 274-0925 • Fax (414) 272-2870 • [www.9to5.org](http://www.9to5.org) • [9to5@9to5.org](mailto:9to5@9to5.org)



### **Sherry Johnson, 9to5 Milwaukee Press contact 274-0923**

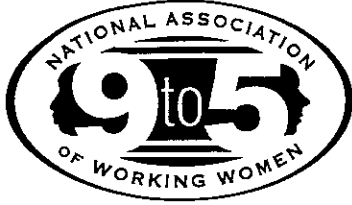
Hello. My name is Sherry Johnson and I have a personal story about Paid Sick Days.

In April 2003, I was fired from my job at Capitol Returns because I had to have surgery on my left eye because of glaucoma. I had been there over 2 years. On April 2<sup>nd</sup> I worked all day, they wished me well and made me believe I have a job to come back to. Actually, they had fired me on paper on April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Since I was fired, I lost all of my insurance coverage, health, life even legal insurance. All of it! And I have not found a decent job since then. Life has not been the same.

Even though I was fired five years ago, it has affected my life and my quality of life since then. Not having Paid Sick Days and being fired because of it can affect a person's ability to take care of themselves and their families for a long time. Paid Sick Days is job and family security.





## **9to5, National Association of Working Women**

207 East Buffalo Street, Suite 211, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

• (414) 274-0925 • Fax (414) 272-2870 • [www.9to5.org](http://www.9to5.org) • [9to5@9to5.org](mailto:9to5@9to5.org)



**David R. Riemer**

**Director of Policy and Planning, Community Advocates of Milwaukee**

**Press Contact: 274-0923**

I regret that my schedule today prevents me from testifying before the committee in person. I did, however, want to share with you my views on Agenda Item Number 080420, the proposed substitute ordinance requiring employers within the city to provide paid sick leave to their employees.

One of the greatest challenges we face in Milwaukee is getting more adults into jobs, raising their wages, and making sure they have “work supports” like child care and health insurance to help them stay employed. Without steady work at decent wages, it is impossible to get out of poverty, afford decent housing, and pay one’s energy bills. I have spent much of my career trying to help the poor get out of poverty through work and seeking to expand their health insurance coverage. And for years before I joined Community Advocates, the organization has focused on helping low-income individuals to obtain health care, find safe and affordable places to live, and keep their utilities on and their utility bills paid.

Yet while work is the key to getting out of poverty, work must be balanced with the duty we all have to care for ourselves, our children, our spouses, and our parents. When we need to see a doctor to diagnose an illness or cure a disease, the demands of work should not erect a barrier too great to overcome. When we need to take time off—as *all* workers must do from time to time—to nurse a sick child, or care for a spouse or parent, work should not impose an absolute veto. In a civilized society, the obligation of adults to work hard to earn their livings must be balanced with workers’ ability to take time off on occasion, during normal working hours and without financial penalty, to care for their health and for the health of the family members they love.

There is no one perfect way to strike the balance, but the ordinance you are considering is a good one. It doesn’t just “give away” paid sick days. Rather, employees must earn it by demonstrating their commitment to stay with an employer and by having paid sick days accrue gradually in proportion to hours worked for the employer. The ordinance carefully limits when paid sick days may actually be used. It also recognizes that small employers need special consideration.

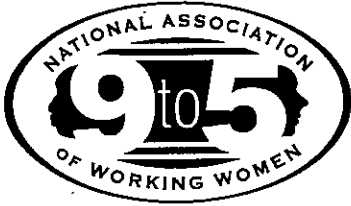
Ideally, this is the kind of law that the State Legislature or the U.S. Congress should adopt, so that Milwaukee’s employers don’t face a different rule than employers in surrounding cities or states. But we should not automatically block innovative and essential policy change that applies only to Milwaukee (compared to other cities) or only





to Wisconsin (compared to other states) in the impossible pursuit of perfect uniformity across jurisdictional boundaries.

Each local ordinance that sets Milwaukee apart from its neighbors (whether temporarily or permanently) must be judged on its own merits. On balance, I believe, *this* ordinance is the right policy—not only because it will strike a better balance for workers between their duty to care and their obligation to work, but because in the end it will not harm Milwaukee employers. The advantages to Milwaukee's employers that flow from requiring paid sick leave—including a more productive workforce no longer torn between the duty to care vs. the obligation to work, the strengthening of employee loyalty precisely because all our employers provide paid sick leave, and the added attraction of jobseekers to Milwaukee employers because of this new benefit—offset any disadvantages due to cost and jurisdictional inconsistency.



## 9to5, National Association of Working Women

207 East Buffalo Street, Suite 211, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

• (414) 274-0925 • Fax (414) 272-2870 • [www.9to5.org](http://www.9to5.org) • [9to5@9to5.org](mailto:9to5@9to5.org)



JoCasta Zamarripa  
Press contact: 414-384-2786

I am a native Milwaukeean. My mother is a single parent who raised four children here. She has spent the majority of her adult life working in the food service industry. She has always possessed a strong work ethic. I can remember staying home alone when I was sick and *Mom* checking in with me throughout the day to ensure all was well.

Later, as a young college student, I remember getting very frustrated with my mother because she would not and could not miss work to stay with one of my sick siblings and would opt, instead, to keep one of my other siblings home from school to care for the sick child.

Today, my mother is 51 years old. She is diabetic. Two of her children have gone on to obtain college degrees. Her youngest child is entering high school this fall. She has one grandchild.

My mother does not have access to paid sick time.

I believe that a minimum amount of paid sick days should be offered to all private employees who work in the City of Milwaukee.





## 9to5, National Association of Working Women

207 East Buffalo Street, Suite 211, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

• (414) 274-0925 • Fax (414) 272-2870 • [www.9to5.org](http://www.9to5.org) • [9to5@9to5.org](mailto:9to5@9to5.org)



**Amy Stear, WI Director 9to5**  
**Press Contact: 274-0923**

9to5, National Association of Working Women is a grassroots membership-based organization that works to strengthen the ability of low-income women and their families to win economic justice through organizing, advocacy and public education on the workplace issues that affect us. We are particularly committed to addressing the lack of family-friendly policies that force too many workers to choose between their paycheck and their responsibilities at home.

Milwaukee is currently struggling with critical issues which highlight the need to help low wage families. Our city is ranked in the top 10 poorest cities in the nation and we struggle with some of the saddest statistics for childhood suffering including one in three children in our city living in poverty. At 9to5 we have heard countless stories from women about the challenges of keeping their jobs while taking care of their families. Most of our reach in Wisconsin is with single mothers in low wage work. The majority of these women do not have paid sick days on their jobs yet most are the primary caregiver for their family. When working women can't get support at their workplace for their family's health needs they are more likely to fail in work.

Lack of paid sick days can mean more than the loss of a day's pay – it often means discipline, up to and including termination. Consequences for employees with no paid sick days include poorer health outcomes for themselves and their children. And there are consequences for the community as well that include threats to public health when sick workers “share” their illnesses with coworkers and, in some cases, unsuspecting customers at their workplaces. Additionally, we all bear the cost of supporting families who must turn to public assistance when workers can't remain stable in their jobs because they or a family member becomes ill.

9to5 led the petition drive to move the proposed Milwaukee Paid Sick Days ordinance because we knew from our work with families in Milwaukee the need for this legislation was great and the potential benefit to our city even greater. We worked with over fifty faith-based, labor, community, health, child advocacy and neighborhood associations to craft the proposed ordinance and then sign over 42,000 Milwaukeeans on the petition. We knew from polling conducted last summer that over 80% of the sampled frequent Milwaukee voters support paid sick days as a minimum standard at the workplace so we were not surprised at the level of support we encountered in our community.

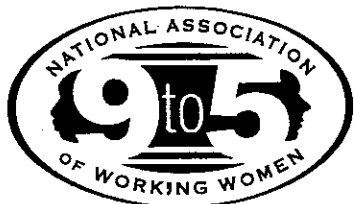
What we heard most often from the thousands of people we spoke with was “this makes sense” and we agree. The ordinance calls for all workers in Milwaukee to be able to earn



paid sick time on an accrual system of one hour for every thirty hours worked up to a maximum of nine days a year. Workers in small businesses accrue slower at a rate of one hour for every fifty hours worked with a maximum potential earning of five days a year.

9to5, our coalition partners and thousands of people in Milwaukee support this proposed ordinance. We ask that you, our Alders, join with us as we lead on the importance of valuing workers, our families and our community. Milwaukee deserves strong, healthy families and a strong, stable workforce.

Thank you.



## 9to5, National Association of Working Women

207 East Buffalo Street, Suite 211, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

• (414) 274-0925 • Fax (414) 272-2870 • [www.9to5.org](http://www.9to5.org) • [9to5@9to5.org](mailto:9to5@9to5.org)



### David Palmer, Milwaukeean and 9to5 Paid Sick Days Activist

Press Contact: 274-0923

My name is David Palmer and I'm in Alderman Bohl's district. I am a graduate student at UW-Milwaukee, and work as a metallurgical engineer and quality supervisor in a local manufacturing plant.

When I started working, I worked in a fast-food restaurant. Because the company did not offer paid sick days, many employees were forced to choose between coming to work sick, or staying home and being unable to pay their bills or feed their children. Faced with this decision, many employees chose to do the former. I remember working side by side with people who were shivering and sweating – and handling food. Working under these conditions often led to illnesses getting worse, and spreading to other employees, as well as customers. In many cases, the lack of paid sick time ultimately resulted in more lost work time than if paid sick days had been available. It also resulted in a health risk to the general public.

As I collected signatures for the Paid Sick Days petition, I heard similar stories from people in neighborhoods all across Milwaukee. There are many people across this city who go to work in fear that their supervisor will notice they are sick and send them home early. There are many others who have lost jobs because they had to take care of sick children or sick parents.

You will hear from those who argue that this ordinance will hurt Milwaukee businesses. In fact, businesses that have implemented paid sick leave programs have actually realized net cost savings, reduced absenteeism, and improved employee retention. It is in the interests of businesses to have healthier employees.

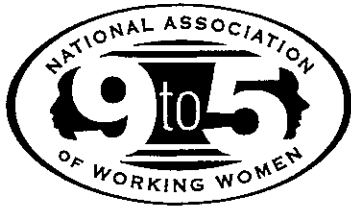
In my career as a quality supervisor, I have learned that businesses sometimes need a little nudge to do what is in their own best interests. For example, businesses may sometimes need a little nudge from their quality departments in order to realize that building products using higher quality parts often actually saves money compared to using low-cost, low-quality parts from overseas, when the hidden costs of scrap and rework are factored in. Similarly, by asking you to pass the Paid Sick Days ordinance, we are asking you to provide Milwaukee businesses with a little nudge to help them to realize that having healthy employees makes financial sense and advances the health and well-being of workplaces.

Working in the manufacturing field, I am well aware that we are engaged in a global race for jobs with China and other developing countries. However, the global race for jobs should not be a race to the bottom. Milwaukee will never be able to compete with China on cost, at least in the foreseeable future. The only way that we will be able to continue to compete in the global market is by having a healthy, well-educated, and productive workforce. Paid sick leave is an important part of that.

There are those who argue that national legislation is needed on this issue. What would send a stronger message to our national leaders to take action on this issue than for a blue-collar, Midwestern city like Milwaukee to pass an ordinance of this type? If our national leaders will not demonstrate leadership on this issue, then we must. Over 40,000 Milwaukee residents have asked the Common Council to enact this ordinance or place it on the November ballot. The



Common Council should listen to the people and enact this important piece of legislation.  
Thank you.



---

## 9to5, National Association of Working Women

207 East Buffalo Street, Suite 211, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

• (414) 274-0925 • Fax (414) 272-2870 • [www.9to5.org](http://www.9to5.org) • [9to5@9to5.org](mailto:9to5@9to5.org)



**Margaret Henningsen, Legacy Bank**

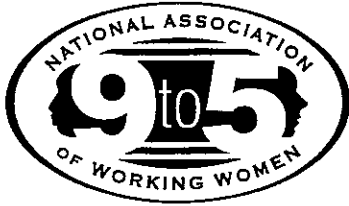
**Press Contact: 274-0923**

Legacy Bank supports the rights of working women. It is unbelievable that in this day and age women are expected to come to work sick or leave their family members at home sick to avoid losing income. We are proud supporters of the right to paid sick days because no one should be forced to choose between coming to work sick or staying home and losing income. We offer paid sick leave because it is good for business. Our employees appreciate it – it reduces illness in the workplace that can cost more than paying for sick leave if three or four employees are out ill, it reduces stress for the employee and it makes a healthier, more stable workforce.

We want Milwaukee to thrive—we support 9to5's work to fill the gap and make it possible for women to be treated equally in the workplace.



Recycled paper



---

## **9to5, National Association of Working Women**

207 East Buffalo Street, Suite 211, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

• (414) 274-0925 • Fax (414) 272-2870 • [www.9to5.org](http://www.9to5.org) • [9to5@9to5.org](mailto:9to5@9to5.org)



### **Sherry Johnson, 9to5 Milwaukee Press contact 274-0923**

Hello. My name is Sherry Johnson and I have a personal story about Paid Sick Days.

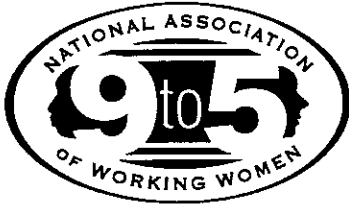
In April 2003, I was fired from my job at Capitol Returns because I had to have surgery on my left eye because of glaucoma. I had been there over 2 years. On April 2<sup>nd</sup> I worked all day, they wished me well and made me believe I have a job to come back to. Actually, they had fired me on paper on April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Since I was fired, I lost all of my insurance coverage, health, life even legal insurance. All of it! And I have not found a decent job since then. Life has not been the same.

Even though I was fired five years ago, it has affected my life and my quality of life since then. Not having Paid Sick Days and being fired because of it can affect a person's ability to take care of themselves and their families for a long time. Paid Sick Days is job and family security.







## 9to5, National Association of Working Women

207 East Buffalo Street, Suite 211, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

• (414) 274-0925 • Fax (414) 272-2870 • [www.9to5.org](http://www.9to5.org) • [9to5@9to5.org](mailto:9to5@9to5.org)



### Testimony Before the Milwaukee Common Council

Ellen Bravo

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

414-536-8665

July 21, 2008

*"This bill would create chaos in business never yet known to us....It sets an all time high in crackpot legislation. Let me make it very clear that I am not opposed to the social theory.... No decent American citizen can take exception to this.... What I do take exception to is any approach to a solution of this problem which is utterly impractical and in operation would be much more destructive than constructive to the very purposes which it is designed to serve."*

You may think this quote comes from Tim Sheehy of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce in opposition to the ordinance guaranteeing a minimum number of paid sick days for employees in Milwaukee. Actually, the author was Representative Arthur Phillip Lamneck (D-OH) arguing more than 70 years ago (November 1937) against the proposed law to abolish child labor and to establish a minimum wage. Those minimum standards did not destroy the American economy—neither did the Family and Medical Leave Act, and neither will sick days.

Twenty years ago 9to5 helped lead a coalition to win a state family leave law. Tim Sheehy argued then that there was no need for such a bill because employers were already "taking care" of their employees. In addition, he and other opponents claimed, requiring a floor on family leave would lead business to flee and render our state uncompetitive – costing jobs and hurting the very people we wanted to help.

We were successful in 1988, and as a result of passage here and in a number of other states, the FMLA became the law of the land. In 1995, I served on a bipartisan Commission on Leave appointed by Congress to study the impact of the law on employers and employees. Here's what we found: All employers weren't "taking care" of their workers. Two-thirds of all covered firms had to change their policy because they were not yet providing the range of leave required by the law. We also found that the measure had a positive or neutral effect on profits and growth.

The FMLA was a big step forward, but it does not cover routine illness. Fortunately, most kids don't get leukemia but they do all get colds and stomach flu. Health officials ask parents not to go to work sick or send their children to school sick. School officials insist parents pick up a child who becomes ill at school. Parents are required to get children immunized; students are suspended if their parents don't comply. Yet half the workforce, and three-fourths of low-wage workers, could lose not only a day's pay but their job simply for complying with these rules.



Children aren't the only ones at risk. Every one of us is likely to be served flu with our soup, given that seven out of eight food service workers lack paid sick days.

Taxpayers also pay a price. A study by the Urban Institute found that low-wage workers with more than two years job tenure were no more likely to receive paid sick days than those who worked less than a year. Recent welfare recipients fared the worst. There is broad agreement that work must pay. But work can't pay if it doesn't last – and it can't last if it jeopardizes kids.

Mr. Sheehy argues that small businesses can't afford to replace certain key employees. This is why a reasonable sick days policy makes good business sense. Refusing an employee sick time forces businesses to replace workers on a permanent basis, an expensive proposition. Studies show the cost of hiring and training a new salaried employee to be 150 percent of compensation. Replacing even an \$8 an hour worker costs more than \$5500 each. As one manager put it, "It's all about retention. It's very costly to find people and train them and have them understand how you do business. When we train people, we want them to stay."

Best practice employers already provide paid sick time because they know the benefits to the bottom line as well as to workers and their families. According to a 2001 study published in the *Journal of Managerial Issues*, offering workers the option of taking time off when a family member is sick affects profits positively.

In addition, a Cornell study states that "presenteeism" - employees coming to work even though they are ill, which poses potential problems of contagion and lower productivity – costs \$180 billion annually in lost productivity and may well cost more than absenteeism due to illness.

Business leaders in Milwaukee should follow the lead of Dan Scherotter, Vice President of the Golden Gate Restaurant Association. "To be honest," he told a public radio reporter, "if we fight it (paid sick days), we look like complete jerks."

A minimum standard regarding paid sick days will level the playing field, boost productivity and profits, improve individual and public health, add to the chances of success for our children, add dignity to the aging population. As a city, we must ensure that family values don't end at the workplace door.

I coordinate a national network of state coalitions working to win paid sick days and other policies that value families at work. Milwaukee's proposal is part of a national movement working to bring our labor standards in sync with the realities of today's workforce and the values of the public. In every coalition we have participation by business owners who understand that this is good for their bottom line – and the right thing to do.

Here's an example from Lance LaFave in Newton, MA, a distributor of bathroom products with five employees: "We decided to provide paid sick days for several reasons, but the most important is that we felt it would be morally wrong to not provide something so basic. We also believe that it benefits our company in a number of ways. It helps with employee loyalty and retention, it minimizes the risk of contracting illness, and we need our employees healthy, rested, and efficient, not dragging when they come to work because they can't afford to miss a day's

pay. I can say first hand that the benefits exceed the costs....This [measure] would put all businesses on the same playing field and ensure that many in our workforce don't have to choose between their health and putting food on their table."

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your passing this ordinance or passing it on to the voters of our city.



## **9to5, National Association of Working Women**

207 East Buffalo Street, Suite 211, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

• (414) 274-0925 • Fax (414) 272-2870 • [www.9to5.org](http://www.9to5.org) • [9to5@9to5.org](mailto:9to5@9to5.org)



### **Jayne Montgomery, Wisconsin State Director Campaign Against Violence Press Contact: 274-0923**

Good afternoon. My name is Jayme Montgomery and I am the Wisconsin State Director of Campaign Against Violence. Our members were active in the recent campaign to sign Milwaukee residents on a petition supporting an ordinance that would set a new minimum standard of paid sick days for all workers in our city. CAV knows how important it is to establish this standard in Milwaukee. We work with some of the most vulnerable families in the central city. One of the reasons our youth activists are engaged in our programming is because they want to ensure their families have every opportunity to achieve economic success. Many of these young people have had to forego their educational opportunities to cover for their parents when illness strikes in their homes. They have had to fill in as caregivers when younger siblings are sick because their parent could not risk losing pay or even their jobs to stay home. The cost to youth in our community as a whole is great - when young people miss school, even when it's to help their families, there is a potential of harm to that student's education. The last thing we need in Milwaukee is more young people struggling to find work without a high school education.

A sense of fear and emergency is created every time a child in the household becomes ill and that parent has to make the tough decision of potentially losing their job or going to work and leaving that child in the care of siblings or even alone. Teenagers don't need the added pressure of worrying about the solvency of their families' economics - especially when often times they are already dealing with the stress of losing someone they love to senseless violence.

Too many kids in low income families are expected to function as caregivers for other family members even if it's at cost to their own future. This just isn't fair.

This is particularly disturbing given the comments from the MMAC leadership regarding the future needs of our workforce. How can young people be prepared to step up into jobs when a labor shortage occurs, if they have to sacrifice their educational opportunities just keep their families afloat because their parent can't miss work when there is a family health care need? We need to support working families now in order to ensure we will be able to answer the need of business in the future.

Please support strong, healthy families in Milwaukee and move this proposed ordinance for Paid Sick Days to the full Common Council meeting on July 30, 2008. Our families deserve every opportunity to achieve economic success within the workforce.





## **9to5, National Association of Working Women**

207 East Buffalo Street, Suite 211, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

• (414) 274-0925 • Fax (414) 272-2870 • [www.9to5.org](http://www.9to5.org) • [9to5@9to5.org](mailto:9to5@9to5.org)



**Statement from Larry Miller**  
**Retired Administrator, W. E. B. DuBois High School**  
**July 21, 2008**  
**414-536-8665**

Lack of flexibility for parents at work affects high school students as well as children in elementary school. When a parent can't stay home, it's often our students who fill in to care for an ill sibling or cousin. That means valuable time missed in classes and other school activities.

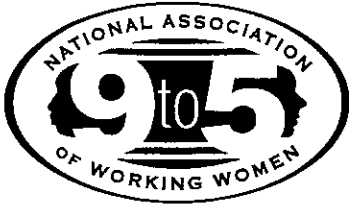
Many people, including leaders in the business community, lament poor attendance in MPS. Certainly many factors need to be addressed. But here's one that employers need to play a role in: allowing parents to have paid time for caregiving – including time to be home with a sick child, or to take children for immunizations or other preventive care measures.

We also hear complaints about parents not being more involved in their children's education. I know from experience that many more parents would be involved if they had consideration at work.

If we care about kids, then we have to pay attention to what happens to their parents on the job. No parent should have to choose between a paycheck – or a job – and caring for a sick child or being involved in their children's education. And no high school students should have to miss their own classes in order to make sure a younger sibling isn't home alone.



The ordinance guaranteeing a minimum number of paid sick days is an excellent step for Milwaukee's children.



## **9to5, National Association of Working Women**

207 East Buffalo Street, Suite 211, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

• (414) 274-0925 • Fax (414) 272-2870 • [www.9to5.org](http://www.9to5.org) • [9to5@9to5.org](mailto:9to5@9to5.org)



**Lee Henderson, Past Local AFSCME President**

**Press Contact: 274-0923**

Good Afternoon Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

My name is Lee Henderson; I am coming before this Committee to express the importance of supporting this legislation that would require employers to provide paid sick days for persons they employ in the City of Milwaukee.

As a parent and former employee of County Government, I know how important it is to have Paid Sick Leave to cover you when there are illnesses with in your family and the member is in need of your care. No parent should be forced into abject poverty because their child, elderly parent or other family member becomes ill. No individual should have to choose between caring for a family member or face exhausting their entire economic base.

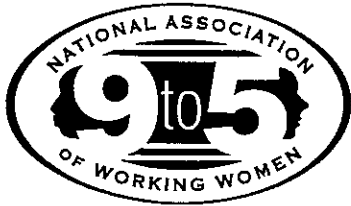
In March of this year (2008); New Jersey passed a bill in support of Paid Family Leave. New Jersey developed a concept, which would allow employees to contribute minimally towards this measure. The City of Milwaukee could also develop similar measures to ensure that no family is forced into bankruptcy because it had become necessary for them to provide the care for their child or other family member.



If the intention is to keep America working then we need to become more creative in our thinking, if keeping our families intact is the premise of our society we ought to ensure as much stability to our families as possible.

Thank You





## 9to5, National Association of Working Women

207 East Buffalo Street, Suite 211, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

• (414) 274-0925 • Fax (414) 272-2870 • [www.9to5.org](http://www.9to5.org) • [9to5@9to5.org](mailto:9to5@9to5.org)



**Paula Pennebaker, Executive Director of the YWCA of Greater Milwaukee**  
**Press Contact: 267-3120**

Testimony at Milwaukee Common Council

PAID SICK DAYS

Monday, July 21, 2008

Good Afternoon!

My name is Paula Pennebaker. I am Executive Director of the YWCA of Greater Milwaukee and I come today as a supporter of a paid sick leave ordinance.

Let me start by saying that in my 30+ years of work experience, I have been blessed to have worked for employers that offered paid sick leave. For long stretches of time during that period, I went without EVER having taken one day of it and not because of martyrdom or fear of backlash. That changed when first, I had a child and second, my widowed mother became ill and I became her caregiver. At age five, my otherwise exceptionally healthy daughter contracted chicken pox and I was forced to take four of my six sick days in January because my husband—her father—was traveling for his job. I was left with only two days for the remainder of the year. I didn't use either of them. During my caregiver years, I needed time to take my mom to scheduled doctor appointments and urgent care visits. I allocated my paid time off to ensure I had time for the three of us. What, you say, is the significance of my experience?

Many moms and dads don't have the luxury of being able to take off under similar circumstances because they can't afford to. We see a lot of these people at the YWCA, people who work in low-wage jobs without any benefits--let alone paid sick time--and taking off for situations described above, is not an option. Because most child care centers won't keep a child in the early presentation of chicken pox, for example, these parents--many of whom are single moms--are faced with a choice. Since neither of the personal examples I cited are covered by the Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA) which



provides certain job protections for employees faced with their own or a family member's illness--and by the way, only companies with 50 or more employees are required to comply with the federal act--employees may be forced to choose the kid and lose the job. I ask you, "Is this a reasonable choice?"

Then there's the employee her- or himself who is ill and drags themselves to work. David Weber, a professor of epidemiology and pediatric medicine at University of North Carolina states, *Of course, it's not that sick employees intend to spread their germs around. Employees choose to brave their illnesses and work for reasons related to responsibility, perception, and finances.*

*Some employees enjoy their jobs and feel they owe it to their employer to work as much as possible, Weber told the Herald-Sun. Other employees feel their supervisor may take punitive action against them if they're not present.*

*A third group of employees can't afford to stay home, either because they have no paid sick leave or because they've used it already, he said.*

*While many employees feel they must work while they're sick, corporate environments are beginning to recognize that sick workers need to stay home and recuperate, said Frank Scanlan, spokesman for the Society for Human Resource Management in Alexandria, VA.*

That's why we're here today sadly, to promote an ordinance that will force employers to pay sick workers or workers with sick family members to stay at home.

I have always been a very loyal, committed employee in large part, due to the fact that my employers valued me as an employee. They understood that the cost of turnover is often higher than the cost of paying an employee to stay away from the workplace when they themselves are sick or their minds are not on their work because they're worried about a sick child, spouse or parent. I also understood the quid pro quo relationship of the safety net my employers provided and because they took care of me, I did not and do not abuse the benefit provided to me. Before you allow

yourselves to conclude that I am the exception and not the rule, note that this is a mindset (I believe) more people ascribe to than don't, and for those who may not readily behave in this manner, it is something that can be taught.

As an employer, the YWCA converted a traditional paid sick time policy to a Paid Time Off (PTO) benefit that covers sick days, personal days and vacation days in addition to a complement of other benefits. This plan offers staff the flexibility to use their time as they see fit and eliminates the need for them to lie about being sick when they need time for other personal affairs. We believe it contributes to the fact that we have very low voluntary turnover, an expense a nonprofit can ill afford.

It is unreasonable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for employers to ignore the importance of offering this benefit to all their employees. Certainly, we believe their doing so should be in line with their financial means. It is, however, a pay-me-now-or-pay-me-later proposition, and just as employers have to invest in real property, they must invest in human capital. Good benefit offerings are a good and wise investment.

Thank you!