

April 5, 2016

Los Angeles Economic Development Committee
c/o Office of the City Clerk
200 N. Spring St., Room 470
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Attn: Adam Lid, Legislative Assistant

Re: Council File 14-1731- Follow-up Policy Elements for a Citywide Minimum Wage

Honorable Councilmembers,

I strongly support a Los Angeles citywide paid sick-days law. As a pediatrician and health policy researcher, I recognize the critical importance of paid sick time for the public health. When workers are able to take the time they need to recover from illness or care for a sick family member, we can limit the spread of communicable diseases, protect the health of sick children and the elderly, improve workers' productivity, and boost our economy.

I am writing as an individual, and my comments may not reflect the positions of my organizations. However, as chief of general pediatrics at Mattel Children's Hospital UCLA, professor and scientist at UCLA and RAND, and chair of the Pediatric Policy Council, I have conducted NIH-funded studies on the beneficial effects of paid leave policies on the health and well-being of children and parents. There is little doubt in my mind that paid sick time is a substantial contributor to public health and a benefit that is unavailable to far too many vulnerable families.

Considerable research indicates that lack of paid sick days contributes to the spread of flu and other illnesses. Particularly for workers handling food or working with vulnerable populations, such as patients in healthcare settings, children, and the elderly, the dangers of working while ill extend well beyond the individual worker to whole communities. Moreover, research shows that when parents have access to paid sick days, they are more likely to ensure their children receive critical vaccinations, and children are more likely to recover quickly from illness when they are cared for by their parents. Workers with sick days are more likely to receive regular well-care, cancer screenings, and prenatal care.

I have seen children in the clinic who were sent to school even though they were sick, and came to see me later. They ended up having a common virus called parvovirus, which causes a relatively mild illness in most children and adults but can have devastating effects in utero. Some of these children had pregnant teachers, who had now been exposed. I have also seen children who were sent to school with asthma symptoms that could have been managed early with medications at home or a quick visit to the clinic but instead developed into full-blown asthma

attacks requiring hospitalization. These kinds of experiences can be prevented with paid sick days that give parents the security to take a day off to care for their sick child.

Thanks to recent healthcare reforms, millions more Californians now have access to health insurance. But in order for Angelenos to reap the benefits of their new coverage, including access to the preventive care that will ultimately save our economy billions of dollars, they must have the time to visit their healthcare providers without fear of losing their jobs or their wages.

The nation's leading public health organization, the American Public Health Association (APHA), has voiced [strong support](#) for laws that guarantee workers access to paid sick time. In the absence of federal law, the APHA has urged states and localities to pass their own paid sick days laws, pointing to San Francisco's law as a model. While the state of California has recently passed its own law, the maximum of three days it guarantees workers lags behind what San Francisco guarantees its workers: up to nine days. We must ensure that workers in Los Angeles catch up to their counterparts in San Francisco, Emeryville, Oakland, and now in our neighboring city, Santa Monica.

The Los Angeles City Council has exercised impressive leadership in passing a \$15 minimum wage; this is an important step that will lift many families out of poverty. Yet, according to one study, one in seven low-wage workers – and one in five low-wage working mothers – has lost a job in the past four years because they were sick or need to care for a family member. If workers risk losing their jobs simply because their children have the flu or they must see a doctor, even a higher minimum wage will not be enough to ensure they can support their families.

I respectfully ask that the committee support a strong local paid sick days law without delay. It is essential for a healthy Los Angeles.

Sincerely,



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