

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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As flu epidemic spreads,

PHILADELPHIANS CALL FOR EARNED SICK DAYS

Council Members Re-Introduce Earned Sick Days Bill to Protect Public Health, Boost the Economy, and Strengthen Financial Security for Working Families

PHILADELPHIA—In a strong show of support, small business owners, workers, doctors, health care practitioners, economists, parents and Philadelphia City Council Members rallied behind a new push for earned sick days in City Hall Thursday morning. The group, organized by Philadelphia’s Coalition for Healthy Families and Workplaces, is calling on City Council to pass the Healthy Families and Workplaces Bill, which would ensure that the 200,000 Philadelphians who do not have access to paid sick days are able to take time off when they or their families are ill.

“In this economy, we need to make sure that people can afford to stay home when they or a loved one are sick without fear of falling behind on bills or losing their job,” said **Councilman Bill Greenlee, Co-Sponsor of the 2013 Healthy Families and Workplaces Bill**. “No working person in Philadelphia should be forced to choose between their family’s economic security and their family’s health.”

Councilman Bill Greenlee introduced the 2013 Healthy Families and Workplaces Bill, whose cosponsors include Council President Darrell Clarke, Councilman Curtis Jones, Councilwoman Maria Quinones-Sanchez, Councilwoman Cindy Bass, Councilwoman Marian Tasco, and Councilman W. Wilson Goode, Jr. More than 100 Philadelphians lined the halls to show their support for the bill, which would enable workers to earn one hour of sick time for every 40 hours worked, while protecting the flexibility that small business owners need to thrive.

In the middle of the worst flu season in a decade that has resulted in 22 deaths in Pennsylvania alone, the urgent need for earned sick days and its immediate public health benefits are clear. The Center for Disease Control estimates that [7 million Americans](#) were infected by co-workers who went to work sick during the 2009 H1N1 outbreak. According to an October 2012 [report](#) by the Restaurant Opportunities Center, more than 92 percent of the workers in Philadelphia’s booming restaurant industry are unable to earn paid sick time. Of the nearly 65 percent of restaurant workers who admitted to working while sick, more than 70 percent said they had no choice because they could not afford to miss a day’s wages.

"About a year or so ago I became ill and had to make the choice that my health was worth more to me than my rent. Unfortunately I lost my job. Most workers do not make the same choice I made nor have option to take the day off and are inclined to work sick," said Calvin, a restaurant worker from South Philly. "In this economy you can't ask anyone to risk their job or give up wages. Whether it's a cold, flu, stomach virus, injury, you name it, people are being forced to choose between keeping food on the table and taking time off. That's really no choice at all."

The CDC estimates the average cost to employers of the flu at [\\$10.4 billion](#), but the cost of this year’s epidemic is expected to be much higher. It is for this reason that more business owners are supporting earned sick days legislation.

“My business operates on tight margins, and I’ve found that offering paid sick time to my employees is a policy that boosts my bottom line,” said Lori Davis, Development Director at Porter’s Childcare, in North Philadelphia with 65 employees. “When one of my employees is sick, I want them to stay home, recover and come back focused and

ready to work. Turnover is a huge cost for a business, and training new employees is expensive. My employees stick with me for years, and that helps my business run smoothly.”

In 2011, a majority of Council Members sponsored a similar bill that was later overturned by Mayor Nutter under pressure from big business lobbyists. The Council then passed a sick time bill covering workers whose employers operate on city contracts.

Numerous studies show the positive impact that earned sick days has on businesses and the economy, and cities and states have been adopting earned sick days policies to help improve public health and bolster the economic recovery over the past year. [Economists](#) say job retention policies like earned sick days help reduce unemployment and strengthen economic recovery. San Francisco, which has had an earned sick days law for six years, was rated by PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2011 as one of the top cities in the world to do business, and more than [two in three San Francisco businesses](#) support the local law with six in seven reporting no negative impact on profitability.

“We can’t afford to wait any longer,” said Marianne Bellesorte, Senior Director of Public Policy and Media Relations at PathWays PA. “We hope this is the year that Philadelphia’s workers will finally get some much-needed relief, and our city will be healthier for it. We need earned sick days to prevent a public health crisis like this flu from becoming a financial crisis for working families.”

Across the country, cities and states have been adopting paid sick days policies to help improve public health and bolster the economic recovery. In the summer of 2011, [Connecticut](#) passed the first statewide paid sick days law, followed soon after by a city-wide law in [Seattle](#) adding to the existing laws in San Francisco and Washington, DC, and to growing momentum from active campaigns in [Portland, Massachusetts, New York City](#) and [others](#).

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The Coalition for Healthy Families and Workplaces

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