

## **The Public Health Case for Massachusetts Ballot Question #4 Earned Sick Time**

**Prevent the spread of contagious disease:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that more than 2.5 million cases of foodborne illness each year were caused by sick restaurant workers contaminating food while on the job. During the H1N1 epidemic, 7 million people caught the virus from co-workers who came to work while sick.<sup>i</sup>

**Promote timely health care screenings and prompt treatment:** More than one in four parents of a child with asthma (28 percent) has missed one of their child's medical appointments because they could not get time off work. Injuries on the job are more common when workers have to work while ill. Earned sick time promotes the timely detection and prompt treatment of illness, and allows workers and children to recuperate at home where they will recover more quickly.

**Reduce health care costs:** The United States spends \$1.1 billion in avoidable emergency department costs because patients or their parents cannot take time off from work to see a doctor during normal business hours. Instead, these patients either go straight to the Emergency Room (ER) or are forced to wait until their health condition worsens, at which point ER treatment is a necessity.<sup>ii</sup>

### **Additional Reasons for Supporting Ballot Question #4 Earned Sick Time**

**Reduces the harmful effects of “Presenteeism”:** Working while sick lowers our productivity and costs the United States \$160 billion annually – considerably more than the cost of earned sick time.

**Fair to workers:** Hardworking people shouldn't have to choose between the job they need and the children they love. They deserve to be able to take a sick child to the doctor or the hospital without worrying about being fired.<sup>iii</sup>

**Good for businesses:** Earned sick time reduces employee turnover, contagion and lost productivity, and helps the bottom line.

**Good for our local economy:** When working families don't have financial security, spending in our local communities decreases and our whole economy suffers.

**Good for job growth:** States and municipalities that have implemented earned sick time have seen job growth, and most employers report no negative impact on their profitability.

**Strengthens our economy:** Economists report that job retention policies like earned sick time help reduce unemployment and strengthen the economy (Center for Economic and Policy Research).

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<sup>i</sup> Robert J. Drago, Ph.D., and Kevin Miller, Ph.D., “Sick at Work: Infected Employees in the Workplace During the H1N1 Pandemic”, IWPR Briefing Paper No. B264 (February 2010) at: <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/sick-at-work-infected-employees-in-the-workplace-during-the-h1n1-pandemic>

<sup>ii</sup> Kevin Miller, Ph.D, Claudia Williams, and Yangman Yi, “Paid Sick Days and Health: Cost Savings from Reduced Emergency Department Visits”, IWPR Report No. B#301 (November 2011) at: <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/paid-sick-days-and-health-cost-savings-from-reduced-emergency-department-visits>

<sup>iii</sup> Mark A. Schuster, M.D., Ph.D., and Paul J. Chung, M.D., “Time Off to Care for a Sick Child – Why Family Leave Policies Matter”, N Eng J Med 2014; 371: 493-495 (August 7, 2014) DOI: 10.1056/NEJMp 1404860