

Earned Paid Sick Time Ordinance

Presented by

Erin Hennessey
Southern Maine Workers' Center

and

Eliza Townsend
Maine Women's Lobby



ERIN: My name is Erin Hennessey and I am with the Southern Maine Workers' Center.

ELIZA: My name is Eliza Townsend and I am with the Maine Women's Lobby.

ELIZA: Thank you for the opportunity to present why we're so excited about the proposed Earned Paid Sick Time ordinance that your committee is considering.

ELIZA: Many of our neighbors, friends, and ourselves here in Portland are struggling. And that means that we cannot stay out of work for three days to get over the flu, and so we work, and get worse, and threaten to infect our coworkers and customers. We cannot leave work early to pick up a sick child from school, and so she stays at school, infecting others, unable to learn. We cannot miss a day's pay to take our partner to their doctor's appointment, even if they are facing a serious illness. And so our loved ones are isolated in the face of health crises. And these stories, playing out over and over again all over this City, make Portland an unhealthier place for all of us.

Paid sick time is a proven tool to:

- Decrease the spread of illness
- Improve recovery
- Support preventative health care
- Improve productivity for businesses
- Reduce employee turnover



ERIN: When workers can earn paid sick time, our communities are healthier. Paid sick time helps to:

- Decrease the spread of contagious illnesses—especially important as we enter cold and flu season in Maine
- Improve recovery from illnesses and treatments
- Supports the use of preventative care, including prenatal care, which helps prevent some illnesses from becoming more serious. Studies show that people with paid sick days are more likely to have had doctors visits within the past year, and more likely to be getting important preventative tests like mammography, Pap test, and endoscopy at the recommended intervals.
- Access to paid sick days reduces on-the-job injuries, reduces turnover, and lowers costs from something called 'presenteeism' -- which is people showing up to work sick, when they're not actually able to perform. All those problems currently cost businesses real money, and instituting paid sick time will help alleviate those costs.
- Businesses also save money from reduced employee turnover when employees have access to paid sick time.

Paid sick time helps Portland children:

- Aids children's health
- Shortens hospital stays
- Reduces disease transmission—
keeping more kids healthy and in
school



ELIZA: Paid sick time are also important for the health and well-being of Portland children. When parents don't have access to paid sick time, children go to child care and school when then should stay home. They don't go to the doctor for preventive health like the should. And illnesses spread throughout our community.

ELIZA: Ina Demers, an educator here in Portland shared a story that illustrates this problem, "I had a fourth grader, crying in my classroom, because she had a headache. The nurse told me that she also had a fever. I asked her to call her mom so she could go home, and she said that her mom needed to go to work because they needed the money to pay rent. Without paid sick time, workers need to send their sick children to school which is bad for the sick student and bad for the students they share a classroom with. Parents should not have to face the impossible situation of choosing between a paycheck or keeping their sick child home."



ELIZA: This poster is from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. Medical and disease professionals always recommend that workers stay home when sick—and these warnings are shared every year during flu season as well as when breakouts of more serious diseases, like Ebola and whooping cough, occur. We know that the right thing to do is to stay home when we're ill, but for those without paid sick time, that isn't a financially viable option.

Growing Momentum for Earned Paid Sick Time Policies

8 states, including:

Connecticut
Massachusetts
Vermont
Rhode Island



ERIN: The policy makes common sense, which is why it has already been enacted all over the country, in states and cities large and small. Eight states, 2 counties, and 30 cities, including ten cities that are of comparable size or smaller than Portland, all have similar policies. And what's more, many businesses supported these policies once they went into effect.

ERIN: Among the eight states are four New England states, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Rhode Island.

Growing Momentum for Earned Paid Sick Time Policies

30 cities & 2 counties, including (by population):

Emeryville, CA 11,671
Morristown, NJ 19,016
Montclair, NJ 38,700
Bloomfield, NJ 48,539
Plainfield, NJ 50,636
Irvington, NJ 54,425
New Brunswick, NJ 56,910
East Orange, NJ 64,789
Passaic, NJ 70,635
Trenton, NJ 84,056



ERIN: A third of the cities that have passed earned paid sick time laws are a comparable size to Portland, or smaller, as you can see from this list. As you know, in 2016, Portland's population was estimated at 66,937.

ERIN: Momentum for this policy is growing. And here in Portland, on Election Day, 1800 voters signed on in support of this ordinance. People know that this is common sense and needed.

All Workers!

An estimated 26,000 workers in Portland cannot take one paid day off if they're sick.

Many of these workers are in low-wage jobs with high people contact: restaurants, retail, child & elder care.

Two years after NYC enacted its policy, a poll found that 84.6% of businesses said the policy had no impact on their costs.



ERIN: Last year it came out that more than half of Americans, 63%, don't have enough of a financial cushion to cover a \$500 unexpected expense. And you don't need us to tell you that if you're a woman, or a person of color, or an immigrant, this statistic is significantly worse. Missing a paycheck due to an illness is a scary proposition when you're living on the edge of poverty. Getting fired because you missed work due to an illness is even scarier.

ERIN: This policy covers all workers in Portland, regardless of the size of business they work for. Small businesses like Aura, Think Tank, Cong Tu Bot, Etain, and Coffee By Design already support this proposal. They understand that this policy will not only help their employees, it will help their workplace culture, because when workers feel taken care of instead of disposable, morale improves and people stay.

ERIN: It's important that businesses of all sizes be included because the Department of Labor estimates 8,000 people in Portland work for businesses which have fewer than ten workers, and more than 28,000 work for business with fewer than 50 employees. Small businesses are also less likely to already provide paid sick days to workers. Nationally, less than 40% of business with 1-9 employees offer paid sick days, as compared to 77% of companies with 250 or more employees.

ERIN: When these policies are implemented, they don't harm business. For example, two years after NYC enacted its policy, a poll found that 84.6% of businesses said the policy had no impact on their costs.

Justice

"Given the disproportionate access to paid sick leave based on race, ethnicity and income status, coupled with its relationship to health and mental health, paid sick leave must be viewed as a health disparity as well as a social justice issue." -LeaAnne DeRigne, Ph.D., of Florida Atlantic University



ELIZA: As LeaAnne DeRigne of Florida Atlantic University said in a recent report, "Given the disproportionate access to paid sick leave based on race, ethnicity and income status, coupled with its relationship to health and mental health, paid sick leave must be viewed as a health disparity as well as a social justice issue."

ELIZA: According to one study, nearly 40 percent of mothers say they are solely responsible for staying home from work with sick children, compared with only 3 percent of fathers. In fact, "being female doubles the odds of experiencing job termination related to family illness." For women who struggle to hold down jobs while juggling caregiving responsibilities, even a small amount of paid sick time could provide the wiggle room necessary to avoid job loss, and help keep families healthy.

ELIZA: We know that People of Color, immigrants, and women are more likely to work in low-wage jobs that also do not offer employees the ability to earn paid sick time.

Reflect our Families

Broad definition of “family” that supports the diverse families and caregiving relationships in our community.

Today, more than 10 million people have the legal right to paid sick time with a family definition that includes chosen family.



ERIN: Another aspect of this policy that we’re excited about is it’s wide definition of family. It includes traditional and legal definitions of family as well as “any other individual related by blood or affinity” who is the equivalent of a family relationship. That language is an acknowledgment and celebration of the fact that people in our community exercise our freedom to form families and take responsibility for each other in ways that the law didn’t previously recognize. This is important to LGBTQ people in particular, because there are many people in this community who have been disowned by their biological family because of their identities and are instead supported by chosen family. They should be able to care for whomever they deem a loved one, regardless of their legal or biological relationship to that person.

Supports Victims/Survivors of Violence

Paid “Safe Days” are vital to help survivors of violence access critical services without risking financial security.



ELIZA: We also want to highlight that this policy allows employees to take the leave they’ve earned to receive medical attention and counseling to recover from domestic abuse, sexual assault, harassment, or stalking. These “safe days” are vital to help survivors of violence access critical services without risking financial security, and when leave policies fail to cover these circumstances, it can further stigmatize and traumatize victims.

Earned Paid Sick Time

Provide Portland workers, families, and businesses with:

- Better health, less spreading of illnesses
- Lower health costs
- Healthier children and schools
- Greater financial security
- Less employee turnover
- Racial, gender, and economic justice



ERIN: We are a dense population with a large number of restaurants and the largest school district in Maine. Our health is dependent on one another.

ERIN: Allowing all employees of all businesses in Portland—whether they are full-time or part-time—to earn one hour of sick leave for every 30 hours they work, will make it possible for more workers to recover from illness, seek treatment, or support a loved one to do the same. Although the ordinance makes only a small change in the terms of work for Portland employees, it represents a significant opportunity to improve public health in our city -- for residents, visitors, and children alike.



ELIZA: The proposed ordinance before you would allow all workers in Portland to earn paid sick leave—a critical tool in our public health toolbox. This is a policy that builds on the momentum and experiences of cities and states across the country.

ELIZA: Together we can keep Portland healthy by keeping our workers healthy!

ELIZA: Thank you. We are happy to answer any questions and provide more information.

ELIZA: We've also shared with you additional materials to help with your deliberations. We're happy to look at any of that with you if you have questions.

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