



COMMISSION ON AGING

Montgomery County Commission on Aging
Testimony in Support Statement of Paid and Safe Sick Leave Bill 60-14
January 29, 2015

Introduction

My name is Rudolph Oswald and I am Co-Chair of the Montgomery County Commission on Aging Public Policy Committee. The Commission endorses the paid sick and safe leave bill 60-14. Our 2014 summer study of caregiver needs identified paid sick and safe leave as a gap in support for family caregivers in Montgomery County. While many county employees have paid or safe leave policies through employer benefit programs, union contracts, and legislation covering public employees, those employed elsewhere go without this benefit. Paid or safe leave would enable family caregivers and other county residents to care not only for themselves but also for their children and aging parents without the added fear and stress of potential job and income loss.

Background

US federal law requires large employers of 50 or more to provide employees up to 12 weeks of un-paid leave to attend to the serious health condition of the employee, parent, spouse or child, or for pregnancy or care of a newborn child, or for adoption or foster care of a child.

California, Connecticut, and the District of Columbia have passed legislation establishing paid or safe leave. The state of Massachusetts passed a referendum providing paid sick leave at the recent elections. The cities of San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, New York City, Jersey City, Newark, NJ, San Diego, Eugene OR and Irvington NJ all have ordinances requiring paid or safe leave. Paid sick or safe leave referendums in Trenton and Montclair NJ were recently adopted by their citizens.

Studies of the impact of these laws noted beneficial effects for employees and their families with little or no harmful impacts on business or the community. For example, the District of Columbia's Accrued Sick and Safe Leave Act of 2008 extended paid sick days access to 307,000 private sector workers. A 2013 audit by the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor found no evidence that the law prompted businesses to leave the city or discourage employers from establishing new businesses in it. In 2013, the D.C. City Council passed the Earned Sick and Safe Leave Amendment Act, which expands the original law to cover an additional 20,000 tipped restaurant and bar workers.

Connecticut's paid sick days law took effect on January 1, 2012 and applies to about 287,000 workers. A recent survey of employers found that the law has had a minimal impact on costs, and few employers have made adjustments such as increasing prices or reducing employee hours because of it. Employers themselves identified positive effects of paid sick days, including improved employee productivity and morale, and more than three-quarters of employers expressed support for the law. Further, data from Connecticut's Department of Labor show job growth across industries since the law's implementation, including in the leisure and hospitality industry, which was most affected.

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Position

The Commission on Aging endorses and supports proposal 60-14 requiring employers operating and doing business in the County to provide employees at least 1 hour of leave for every 30 hours an employee, including tipped employees, works in the County up to 56 hours in a calendar year.