



April 4, 2008

Honorable Sandre Swanson, Chair
Assembly Labor and Employment Committee
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA VIA FAX

RE: **AB 2716 (Ma) – SUPPORT**

Dear Assembly Member Swanson:

The Service Employees International Union supports AB 2716 By Assembly Member Fiona Ma, which will allow all workers in California to earn paid sick days at the rate of one hour for every thirty hours worked and use them to care for themselves, a sick family member, or to take leave related to domestic violence or sexual assault. This will create a state mandated minimum requirement for all workers in California, which can be overridden only by a valid collective bargaining agreement.

Nearly 6 million workers in California have zero paid sick days to care for themselves or an ill family member and, under current law, employers are not required to provide them. Until New Jersey and Washington D.C. recently passed laws similar to AB 2716, no state had any laws guaranteeing paid sick days. The lack of any state or federal law paid sick days standard for workers affects workers of all income levels. Data collected by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reveals the inadequacy of paid sick days coverage: more than 59 million workers have no such leave. Even more – nearly 86 million – do not have paid sick leave just to care for sick children.

Low-wage workers are most disproportionately affected by the lack of paid sick days. Research shows that nationally, among working parents with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty line, 41% have no paid leave of any kind (no paid sick leave, no paid vacation, and no paid personal days). Only 22% of food service and hotel workers have any paid sick leave. Workers in child care centers, retail clerks, and nursing homes--even public sector temporary workers--also disproportionately lack this important benefit. The majority of workers without access to paid sick days work most closely with the public and are having to come to work sick. This has an affect on public health.

Human resource managers are reporting this phenomenon as a problem. It is known as “presenteeism” and studies show that it is becoming a larger problem in the workplace. According to a 2007 survey of 317 human resource executives in U.S. organizations, when sick employees show up for work there is a “significant and costly impact on an organization, not only in terms of risking the spread of disease, but also in terms of diminished productivity, quality and attention to safety.” Overall, the survey found that 38% of employers report presenteeism being a problem in their organizations.

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No worker should have to choose between going to work sick or staying home to take care of themselves or a loved one, but that is the choice facing millions of workers in California and across the nation. Workers don't want to come to work sick, but they do it out of fear of reprisal for not showing up to work, fear of losing their job, and fear of not being able to afford losing a day's pay.

SEIU urges you to vote "YES" on AB 2716 (Ma) when it comes before you in the Assembly Labor and Employment Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allen Davenport". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Allen Davenport
Director of Government Relations

Cc: Committee Members
Assemblywoman Fiona Ma