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Paid Leave: Why it Matters Right Now

Background

Paid sick leave has been a priority for Democrats in the MI Legislature for years. Republicans do not support paid sick leave for *all* workers. In 2018, the GOP blocked a paid citizen-led sick leave ballot initiative from appearing on the midterm election ballot, thus taking away citizens' ability to make their own decisions regarding paid sick leave. In a questionable maneuver, the GOP passed a paid sick leave bill exempting small businesses with 10 or fewer employees from having to provide paid sick leave. The GOP did this with the sole purpose of effectively gutting the bill three months later in the Lame Duck legislative session by exempting businesses of 50 or more employees. This left 1.46 million MI workers without paid sick leave.

Core Message

The majority of people in MI support paid sick leave. Flipping the MI State House this November 3 will allow Dems to secure paid sick leave for more MI workers. As long as the Republican-led Legislature holds the majority in the MI State House, paid sick leave bills and citizen-led initiatives will be routinely blocked or gutted. Workers of color, of lower education, and those holding low-wage jobs are much more likely to not accumulate paid sick leave, reinforcing structural racism and economic inequality in the workforce.

Key Arguments

Lack of paid sick leave results in employees working sick, their children attending school sick, or suffering lost wages. More than half of employees in low and average wage jobs go to work "always or most of the time" when sick with the flu. Missed wages can significantly impact a family's monthly budget. Low wage workers are much less able to absorb lost wages when sick than families with higher wages and paid leave benefits.

Paid sick leave is unevenly distributed across workers. Low wage workers are much less likely to accumulate paid sick leave (27%) than high wage workers (87%). Moreover, paid leave is less likely to be available to people of color and lower education levels, further reinforcing the structural racism present in the workforce.



Employees without paid sick leave risk the health of the public during the Covid pandemic. COVID-19 is deadlier and spreads more easily than the flu, making access to paid sick leave even more critical now. Employees should not have to make a choice between their jobs and protecting themselves, their families, and their co-workers.

Why it matters even more now: Health and economic recovery from the Covid pandemic without paid leave. By exempting businesses with fewer than 50 employees, the GOP left 1.46 million people who work for those smaller businesses without paid sick leave. This includes many people who work in retail sales, supermarkets, restaurants, and nursing homes—who are often the same employees that are currently on the frontlines of the coronavirus pandemic.

See complete report: [Paid Leave a Public Health Priority](#)

TALKING POINTS

- The majority of people in MI support paid leave for workers.
- Republicans do not support worker protections, such as paid sick leave.
- Low wage workers without paid leave endure a greater financial burden than high wage workers without paid leave.
- Workers without paid leave frequently work when they are sick or send their children to school sick to avoid lost wages.
- Workers without paid leave pose a threat to public health during the Covid pandemic.
- Without paid leave, recovery from the Covid pandemic is delayed and more Michiganders will die as a result.