



Sick of This

Every Worker in Austin Should Earn Sick Days

All workers, regardless of what kind of job they do or how much they earn, should be able to care for themselves or a loved one. Unfortunately, approximately 223,000 Austin workers – 37 percent of the total workforce – are at risk of losing wages or being fired if they follow doctor’s orders when they or a family member is ill.ⁱ The City of Austin has an opportunity to pass an ordinance to ensure all Austinites have the opportunity to earn paid sick days, which will benefit the Austin economy and lead to significant improvements in health and financial stability for everyone who lives here.

37%

**of Austinites do not have access to
earned paid sick days.**

Paid Sick Days Are Good for Public Health

When workers have to go in sick, it puts us all at risk. Paid sick days make communities healthier.

- Nearly two-thirds of restaurant servers and cooks report that they have served or cooked while ill.ⁱⁱ
- Flu infection rates decreased by approximately six to seven percent in cities with an earned sick days policy.ⁱⁱⁱ Parents without paid sick days are two times more likely to send their child to school sick.^{iv}

Paid Sick Days Are Good for Families

A strong economy is built on strong families, and earning paid sick days is good for parents and kids. For the many Austin families struggling to make ends meet, days of lost pay lead to financial turmoil.

- The slice of the Austin economy comprised of low-wage jobs with few benefits is growing, while the cost of living continues to rise.^v
- More than one in four Austin workers earns less than \$15 an hour,^{vi} yet the wage needed to afford fair market rent for a 1-bedroom home in Austin is \$18.62 an hour.^{vii}
- For a low-income American worker without paid sick days, three days of lost pay is equivalent to an entire monthly grocery budget.^{viii}

Paid Sick Days Are Good for the Economy

What's good for Austin families is good for local businesses, which need consumers and a healthy workforce to thrive. Paid sick days give workers more money to spend at local businesses, reduce the spread of workplace illnesses and provide stability for both workers' families and their employers.

- The vast majority of employers that have been surveyed in places with paid sick days are supportive of the policy after it's been implemented.^{ix}
- Workers are 25 percent less likely to leave their job over a 5-month period if they have access to paid sick days.^x
- The cost to employers nationwide of people working while sick is \$160 billion a year from decreased productivity and unnecessarily extended illnesses.^{xi}
- Workers with paid sick days are 28 percent less likely to be injured on the job than those without paid sick days.^{xii}

A New Day for Austin Businesses and Workers

Work Strong Austin supports the City of Austin's paid sick days policy proposal detailed below.

Up to 8 Days a Year

Workers would be able to earn enough time to recover and care for their families without falling behind on their bills or losing their job. Under the proposed new policy, workers will earn and can use paid sick time over the course of the year, accruing one hour of sick time for every 30 hours worked up to a total of 64 hours or eight days a year unless their employer allows for more. Employees can carry over up to eight days from year to year.

Many Allowable Uses

Austin families need flexibility. The policy guarantees employees can care for themselves, a family member, or anyone that is seen as the equivalent of a family member to deal with a health issue or a domestic violence incident.

Covers All Types of Workers and Employers

Everybody gets sick. The policy allows all workers, including seasonal, temporary, and part- and full-time employees who work at least 80 hours over the course of a year in the City of Austin (the City), to earn paid sick days. The policy only covers private sector employers.

Workers Begin Earning Time as They Work

You can't plan being sick. Whether an employee has just started a job or has been in their job for a while, the policy allow all workers to begin earning and using time right away. A worker's right to to use accrued sick time will not be affected by transferring to a different facility, location, division, or job position by the same employer. Those separated and rehired within 12 months will have their paid sick time reinstated.

Enforcement

We want to ensure that all Austin workers receive a paid sick days standard at work. Adequate enforcement helps ensure employer adoption of the policy. The City's Equal Employment Opportunity/Fair Housing Office will first seek voluntary compliance for violations and not assess a fine. However, if violations are not remedied within 10 days, they have the ability to assess a fine of up to \$500 for each violation.

Respecting Existing Paid Time Off (PTO) Policies

We want a policy that is supportive of employers' existing policies. Employers with existing paid time off (PTO) policies would be in compliance with the policy as long as the time can be used in the same manner and for the same purposes.

Notification of Time Earned

Letting employees know the amount of sick time they have helps ensure they are aware of and use this important workplace standard. The policy requires employers to notify employees in writing of the amount of their paid sick time on at least a monthly basis.

Outreach and Support to Businesses We want to ensure that all Austin workers receive a paid sick days standard at work. Other cities with policies have found that robust outreach and support to businesses to implement the policy ensures the policy is implemented. The policy requires the City to develop a multilingual outreach campaign to educate residents and businesses about the policy. It also requires the campaign include a website with best practices and resources for employers.

Austinites of all Occupations, Incomes, Races and Ethnicities Lack Access to Earned Paid Sick Days

Population Group (by Race/Ethnicity)	Without Access to Earned Sick Days	Population Group (by Occupation)	Without Access to Earned Sick Days
White, non-Hispanic	29%	Computer, engineering, and science	15%
Black, non-Hispanic	41%	Healthcare practitioner and technical	22%
Asian, non-Hispanic	25%	Education, legal, community service, arts, and media	25%
Hispanic	52%	Sales and office	36%
Other/More than one race	27%	Service	65%
		Natural resources, construction, and maintenance	70%
Population Group (by Hours Worked)	Without Access to Earned Sick Days	Population Group (by Annual Income)	Without Access to Earned Sick Days
Less than 35 hours	73%	Less than \$15,000	74%
35-39 hours	48%	\$15,000-\$34,999	46%
40 or more hours	29%	\$35,000-\$64,999	21%
<i>Total Workforce</i>	<i>37%</i>	\$65,000 and higher	13%
		<i>Total Full-Time Year-Round Workforce</i>	<i>29%</i>

Note: Access rates are for individuals, 18 years and older, working in Austin regardless of their place of residence. Percentages and figures may not add to totals due to rounding. "Other race" category includes American Indian or Alaska natives and individuals reporting multiple racial identities. None of these populations were individually large enough for separate estimations; all were kept in the interest of inclusion. White, Black, and Asian racial groups are non-Hispanic. Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2013-2015 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) and 2015 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

For questions, please visit workstrongaustin.org.

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- ⁱ Institute for Women’s Policy Research. “Access to Paid Sick Time in Austin, Texas,” (July 2017), <https://iwpr.org/publications/access-paid-sick-time-austin-texas/>. In this report, estimates of the numbers and percentages lacking access include National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) responses of “Don’t Know” because these workers and their employers are behaving as if paid sick leave is not available. Nationally, of the NHIS participants that responded to the question about whether they have access to paid sick leave, approximately one percent respondents answered “Don’t Know”.
- ⁱⁱ “Paid Sick Days: Good for Business, Good for Workers,” National Partnership for Women & Families, 2012, <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-sick-days-good-for-business-and-workers.pdf>. As cited in: “Serving While Sick: High Risks and Low Benefits for the Nation’s Restaurant Workforce, and Their Impact on the Consumer.” Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, September 30, 2010, <http://www.co.benton.or.us/health/environmental/documents/servingwhilesick.pdf>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Pichler, Stefan and Nicolas R. Ziebarth “[The Pros and Cons of Sick Pay Schemes: Testing for Contagious Presenteeism and Noncontagious Absenteeism Behavior.](#)”, National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 22530, 2016. <https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nber.org%2Fpapers%2Fw22530.pdf>
- ^{iv} Smith, T., & Kim, J. (2010, June). Paid Sick Days: Attitudes and Experiences (p. 6). National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago Publication. Retrieved 10 November 2015, from <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-sick-days-attitudesand-experiences.pdf> as cited in <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/model-paid-sick-and-safe-days-legislation.pdf>
- ^v “Wage: \$15/hr,” National Equity Atlas, PERE and Policy Link, and “Housing Burden” National Equity Atlas, PERE and Policy Link, http://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Housing_burden.
- ^{vi} “\$15/hr,” National Equity Atlas, PERE and Policy Link, [http://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Wages:_\\$15~hr/By_race~ethnicity:38251/Austin-Round_Rock,_TX_Metro_Area/false/Year\(s\):2015/](http://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Wages:_$15~hr/By_race~ethnicity:38251/Austin-Round_Rock,_TX_Metro_Area/false/Year(s):2015/).
- ^{vii} “Out of Reach 2017: Texas,” National Low Income Housing Service, 2017, <http://nlihc.org/oor/texas>.
- ^{viii} Gould, Elise and Jessica Schieder, “Work sick or lose pay?” Economic Policy Institute, (June 28, 2017), <http://www.epi.org/publication/work-sick-or-lose-pay-the-high-cost-of-being-sick-when-you-dont-get-paid-sick-days/>
- ^{ix} “Paid Sick Days: Busting Common Myths With Facts and Evidence,” National Partnership for Women and Families, July 2017, <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/busting-the-myths-about-paid-sick-days.pdf>
- ^x Heather D. Hill, “Paid Sick Leave and Job Stability,” *Work and Occupations* (40)2: 143-173, (2013), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3825168/>. As cited in: Milli, Jessica, Jenny Xia and Jisun Min, “Paid Sick Days Benefit Employers, Workers, and the Economy,” Institute for Women’s Policy Research, (July 2016), <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/wpallimport/files/iwpr-export/publications/B361.pdf>.
- ^{xi} Stewart, W., et al. “Lost Productive Health Time Costs from Health Conditions in the United States: Results from the American Productivity Audit.” *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 45(12), 1234-1246, (2003, December), <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/lostproductive-work-time-american-productivity-audit.pdf>. As cited in: National Partnership for Women and Families. “Paid Sick Days Lead to Cost Savings for All,” (September 2015), <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-sick-days-lead-to-cost-savings-savings-for-all.pdf>
- ^{xii} Asfaw, Abay PhD, Regina Pana-Cryan, PhD, and Roger Ross, PhD, “Paid Sick Leave and Nonfatal Occupational Injuries,” *American Journal of Public Health*, September 2012, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3482022/>