

May 27, 2020

Chair Patricia Jehlen
Acting Chair Stephen Hay
Joint Committee on Labor & Workforce Development
State House
Boston, MA 02133

Re: *An Act Relative to Emergency Paid Sick Time (H.4700/S.2701)*

Dear Chair Jehlen, Acting Chair Hay, and members of the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development,

Eight weeks ago the *Emergency Task Force on Coronavirus & Equity* formed quickly to identify and promote policy solutions to prevent and respond to health and economic inequities in the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. With input and support from scores of public health, grassroots, civil rights, medical, labor, academic, and social service organizations, this Equity Task Force immediately called on state leaders to act on four urgent policy priorities—including **Emergency Paid Sick Time**.

On behalf of the Task Force on Coronavirus and Equity, we submit this testimony **in support of *An Act Relative to Emergency Paid Sick Time (H.4700/S.2701)***, filed by Representative Donato and Senator Lewis, and co-sponsored by more than 100 members of the House and Senate,

As Massachusetts begins to ease certain COVID-19 public health restrictions on businesses, **universal access to paid sick time is an essential public health tool**. The administration’s “Reopening Massachusetts” plan repeatedly stresses the importance of individuals staying home if they feel sick. But for thousands of Massachusetts workers, staying home without pay means losing the income they need to put food on the table, pay rent, purchase essential medications, or pay their utility bills.

Without universal access to paid sick time, workers will feel the need to go to work even when they might be sick. Sick workers could easily spread the virus to their coworkers and customers, leading to a resurgence in COVID-19 cases, and more deaths. Workers in service-sector jobs that cannot be done from home will be the most affected, meaning that the women, immigrants, and people of color who are overrepresented in those jobs will be disproportionately harmed, as they have been throughout this pandemic.

The communities in Massachusetts with the highest levels of poverty, where many workers live paycheck-to-paycheck and lack paid sick time, are already the communities most impacted by the spread of the coronavirus. To protect the public health of our communities during this pandemic, we need to guarantee that all Massachusetts workers have access to additional paid sick time.

***An Act Relative to Emergency Paid Sick Time (H.4700/S.2701)*, would fix a gaping hole in the federal paid sick time benefits provided by the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act**

(FFCRA). The legislation would provide 10 additional days (80 hours) of job-protected paid sick time for immediate use during the COVID-19 outbreak. This Emergency Paid Sick Time would be **available to employees not covered by the federal FFCRA’s paid sick time provisions, including workers at companies with more than 500 employees, and many employees of health care and residential facilities.**

Workers taking Emergency Paid Sick Time to care for themselves or a family member would be paid by their employers at their regular rate of pay, up to a maximum of \$850/week. Employers would then be fully reimbursed by the state.

The Peterson Center on Healthcare and the Kaiser Family Foundation [estimate](#) that the total cost of a single inpatient hospital admission for COVID-19 treatment could cost as much as \$20,000. When a single sick worker could potentially spread the virus to dozens of others, leading to an outbreak that causes multiple hospitalizations, spending a maximum of \$1,700 per worker to ensure that sick workers can stay home is a clear-cut investment in public health.

Massachusetts will not be able to defeat the coronavirus or safely reopen our economy if tens of thousands of workers feel the need to go to work even when they might be sick. We, the undersigned organizations, ask that you support *An Act Relative to Emergency Paid Sick Time* and work to pass it into law **as soon as possible.**

Sincerely,

ACLU of Massachusetts

Gavi Wolfe, Legislative Director

Active Life Adult Day Health Center

Irene Hernandez, Director

Allston Brighton Health Collaborative

Anna Leslie, Director

Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE)

Sofia Owen, Staff Attorney

Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation of Harvard Law School

Robert Greenwald, Faculty Director

Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance

Etel Haxhiaj, Director Public Education & Advocacy

Children's HealthWatch

Stephanie Ettinger de Cuba, Executive Director

Chinese Progressive Association

Karen Chen, Executive Director

City of Malden

Stephen Winslow, City Councilor at Large

Community Health Network for North Central Massachusetts

Chelsey Patriss, Executive Director

Dominican Development Center/Network of Domestic Workers

Magalis Troncoso Lama, Executive Director

Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath)

Chelsea Sedani, Director of Advocacy

Greater Lowell Health Alliance

Kerrie D'Entremont, Executive Director

Greater Malden Asian American Community Coalition

Andrea So, President, Board of Directors

Groundwork Lawrence

Heather McMann, Executive Director

Health Leads

Jennifer Valenzuela, LICSW, MPH, Chief of People & Equity

Health Resources in Action

Steven Ridini, President & CEO

Homes for Families

Elizabeth Peck, Director of Member Engagement and Operations

HousingMatch.org

Dolores Beliso, Executive Director

Immigrants' Assistance Center, Inc.

Helena DaSilva Hughes, Executive Director

Jamaica Plain Progressives

Enid Eckstein, Steering Committee Member

Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action

Cindy Rowe, Executive Director

Jewish Arts Collaborative

Laura Mandel, Executive Director

John Snow, Inc.

Stewart Landers, Director, U.S. Health Services, Boston Office

Mass NOW

Sasha Goodfriend, State President

Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations

David Bryant, Director of Advocacy

Massachusetts Association of Community Health Workers

Jamie Berberena, Regional Coordinator

Massachusetts Association of Health Boards

Michael Hugo, Government Affairs

Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center

Marie-Frances Rivera, President

Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless

Kelly Turley, Associate Director

Massachusetts Communities Action Network

Lew Finfer, Co-Director

Massachusetts Councils on Aging

Tara Hammes, Director of Member Services

Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition

Eva A. Millona, CEO

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

Georgia Katsoulomitis, Executive Director

Massachusetts Public Health Association (MPHA)

Carlene Pavlos, Executive Director

Massachusetts Voter Table

Beth Huang, Director

MassCOSH - Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety & Health

Al Vega, Director of Policy & Programs

MLPB f/k/a Medical Legal Partnership | Boston

Samantha Morton, CEO

National Association of Social Workers - MA Chapter

Jamie Klufts, Director of Communications & Strategic Initiatives

One Family

Valerie Paric, Executive Director

Parenting Journey

Rachael Dubinsky, Events and Communication Manager

Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts

Mehreen Butt, Associate Director of Policy and Government Affairs

Progressive Massachusetts

Jonathan Cohn, Chair, Issues Committee

Project Bread

Jennifer Lemmerman, Director of Government Affairs

Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts

Jessica Collins, Executive Director

Revere Youth in Action

Sandy Wright, Director

Rosie's Place

Filipe Zamborlini, Public Policy Director

SEIU 32BJ

Roxana Rivera, Vice President

Spanish American Center, Inc.

Neddy Latimer, Director

Stavros

Jennifer Lee-Rambharose, Coordinator of IL Services

The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts

Laura Sylvester, Legislative and Community Partnership Coordinator

Toxics Action Center Campaigns

Claire Miller, Lead Organizer and Climate Justice Director

Unitarian Universalist Mass Action

Laura Wagner, MSW, Executive Director

United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley
Danielle Kim, Public Policy Director

Urban Guild Inc.
Jhana Senxian, CEO

Women's Educational Center, Inc. (Cambridge Women's Center)
Jessye Kass, Director

cc:

Senator Jason M. Lewis
Senator Sal N. DiDomenico
Senator Michael O. Moore
Senator John F. Keenan
Senator Patrick M. O'Connor

Representative Elizabeth A. Malia
Representative Steven Ultrino
Representative Gerard J. Cassidy
Representative John Barrett, III
Representative James K. Hawkins
Representative David Allen Robertson
Representative Susannah M. Whipps
Representative Joseph D. McKenna
Representative William L. Crocker, Jr.