



# PAID SICK DAYS

## KNOW THE FACTS IN CONNECTICUT

### At a Glance: Connecticut's Current Paid Sick Days Law

- Connecticut became the first state in the nation in 2011 to require certain employers to provide paid sick days to their employees. Now, more than 20 [states & municipalities](#) have similar laws.
- Under Connecticut's existing law, eligible workers use paid sick days for their own or their child or spouse's illness, injury or health condition; to seek preventive care or medical diagnosis, care or treatment for their own or their child or spouse's mental or physical illness, injury or health condition; or receive assistance related to domestic or sexual violence.
- Connecticut's law applies to employers of 50 or more and covers certain service occupations. "[Service worker](#)" includes restaurant workers, home health aides, retail workers, and others. Nationally chartered nonprofits that provide education, child care and recreation are exempt from the law.
- Covered workers are eligible to use paid sick time after they've worked 680 hours for their employer and an average of 10 hours per week in the most recently completed quarter.
- Workers can use paid sick time to care for a child up to the age of 18 or a spouse.

### Over 88% of workers in Connecticut are not guaranteed paid sick days under current law.

- The law leaves out workers employed by a small business of less than 50 employees, those in jobs outside the narrow definition of "service worker," part time workers or those with multiple jobs, and workers who provide care for loved ones outside of the traditional "nuclear" family.

### Access to paid sick days is critical to racial, gender and economic justice:

- Nationally, nearly [7 in 10](#) of the lowest wage workers, who are disproportionately women and people of color, do not have access to even a single paid sick day.
- The costs of taking unpaid leave can [negatively impact](#) a worker's household budget. Lost wages can equal an entire budget for groceries, gas, utilities, rent or mortgage payments.
- Research shows that access to paid sick days [reduces visits to the emergency room](#), especially among Medicaid patients. Emergency room care often replaces routine medical appointments and leads to higher health insurance costs for businesses and higher family medical expenses for workers.

### We support legislation that strengthens Connecticut's existing paid sick days law to:

1. **Cover all workers** by removing the employer size threshold and lengthy definition of "service worker" outlined in current law. Legislation should require all employers, regardless of size or industry, to provide paid sick time to their employees.
2. **Eliminate the waiting period to take a paid sick day** from 680 hours to immediately after the commencement of employment and remove the requirement that a worker must have worked an average of 10 hours per week in the most recently completed quarter.

3. **Include all types of family structures and relationships** by aligning who a worker can use paid sick days to care for with Connecticut's paid family and medical leave law. This will allow workers to take paid sick days to care for a child of any age, as well as their chosen family. Legislation should also include time to care for a family member who experiences family violence or sexual assault.
4. **Protect against future pandemics** by allowing paid sick time to be used when a worker's place of work or child's school/place of care is closed by public officials for a public health emergency.

## Paid Sick Days vs. Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML)

### Differences Between Paid Sick Days and Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML):

#### → Paid sick days:

- ◆ Paid sick days provide short term time off, usually in daily or hourly increments. Under current law, workers can use paid sick days to recover from an illness like a cold, receive preventive care or diagnosis, or care for a spouse or child under the same circumstances. Workers can also use paid sick days to receive assistance related to domestic or sexual violence.
- ◆ Paid sick days are paid by employers and are accrued on an hourly basis. Covered workers under current law accrue 1 hour for every 40 hours worked and up to 40 hours of paid sick time/year.

#### → Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML):

- ◆ Connecticut's paid family and medical leave (PFML) program operates similarly to a social insurance program. Workers contribute a small portion of their paycheck into a fund administered by the state that they can then draw from when they need to take time off from work to welcome a child, recover from a **serious illness** or care for a loved one with a serious illness. For the full list of qualifying reasons to use PFML, visit [CT Paid Leave's website](#).
- ◆ Serious illness is [defined](#) as an illness, injury or impairment or physical or mental condition that involves inpatient care or continuing treatment.

**Bottom line:** Paid sick days are employer paid and provide short term time off from work, usually in daily or hourly increments. PFML in Connecticut is funded by employee payroll contributions. Workers use paid family and medical leave to recover from or care for a loved one with a serious illness, or to welcome a child.

### Workers Need Access to BOTH Paid Sick Days and PFML, Especially During COVID-19

- Paid sick days **and** PFML work together to provide workers the support they need to care and recover without risking their paycheck or job security.
- A positive COVID-19 diagnosis on its own is not a qualifying reason for PFML unless it meets the law's definition of a "serious illness," or an illness that involves inpatient care or continuing treatment. Mild COVID-19 cases, including those that many workers experienced as a result of the Omicron variant, therefore do not guarantee eligibility for PFML benefits.
- Connecticut's PFML program took effect at the height of a spike in COVID-19 cases in January 2022. According to the CT Paid Leave Authority, [85%](#) of COVID-19 related claims were denied because they did not meet the law's definition of a serious illness.
- This shows that workers need better access to paid sick days to fill this gap in coverage and to take the time that they need to not only care and recover from the virus, but also reduce the spread of COVID-19 to their community.