



City Council reintroduces paid sick days bill

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NEW YORK - Two days after President Obama signed healthcare reform into law, over a hundred people joined City Councilmembers to mark the reintroduction of the Paid Sick Time Act, a new version of legislation introduced in the Council last year.

The bill would allow workers citywide to earn a modest amount of paid sick time on the job - up to five days a year for workers employed at small businesses and up to nine days a year for large firms. Any employer that already provides any paid leave including personal days or vacation usable under equivalent conditions will not have to provide any additional paid sick leave.

According to a study released by the Community Service Society and A Better Balance, as many as 1.85 million working New Yorkers - 48 percent of working New Yorkers - lack even a single day of paid sick time.

"Delivering historic health reform is a victory for all New Yorkers. But until New Yorkers can take a day off when they are sick or need to care for their children - without having to miss a paycheck or worry about losing their job - we are not done. The time has come for paid sick days in New York City," said Councilmember Gale A. Brewer, lead sponsor of the Paid Sick Time Act.

"Because of President Obama and Congress more New Yorkers will have access to healthcare. Now the next step needs to be making sure that all New Yorkers who are sick can earn the paid time off they need to care for themselves, a sick child or go to the doctor," said Donna Dolan, chairwoman of the New York State Paid Family Leave Coalition. The bill has been endorsed by a broad coalition including public health experts, small business owners, advocates for women and families, community organizations, labor unions, and the Working Families Party and is sponsored by 34 members of the New York City Council and Bill de Blasio, the New York City Public Advocate.

"The passage of healthcare reform is a historic victory that will make life better for all New Yorkers, but when nearly half of working New Yorkers can be fired or lose a day's pay for staying home with the flu we have more to do to make quality care a reality for all New Yorkers," said Dan Cantor, Executive Director of the Working Families Party.

The new version of the bill includes significant changes that came about as the result of a dialogue between the Council sponsors and stakeholders including small businesses,

workers, public health experts, and chambers of commerce.

Most significantly the new bill defines small businesses as those that employ fewer than 20 employees. The version of the legislation introduced last year more narrowly defined small businesses as those with fewer than 10 employees. With this change, the vast majority of New York City's private employers would be defined as small businesses under the law.

According to the U.S. Census County Business Patterns data for 2007, the last year for which figures are available, 88 percent of New York City business establishments have fewer than 20 employees. As a result the vast majority of employers would only be required to provide up to 40 hours of paid sick time per year.

"We've taken into account the concerns of small businesses facing tough economic times, so that we can all come together around this as the right bill at the right time. Healthy workers mean more productive businesses and less turnover at businesses of all sizes," said Councilmember Brewer.