



April 12, 2016

Robert Waterman, Compliance Specialist
Wage and Hour Division, U.S. Department of Labor
Room S-3510, 200 Constitution Avenue NW.
Washington, DC 20210

Re: Proposed Department of Labor (Wage and Hour Division) Rule on Establishing Paid Sick Leave for Federal Contractors (RIN 1235-AA13)

Dear Mr. Waterman,

Trust for America's Health (TFAH) writes to express its support for the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL's) proposed rule implementing Executive Order 13706, *Establishing Paid Sick Leave for Federal Contractors* ("the EO" or "the Order"). As a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to saving lives by making disease prevention a national priority, we believe that job-guaranteed paid sick days are a key component of making America healthier.

As we highlighted in our recent report, *Outbreaks: Protecting Americans from Infectious Diseases*, paid sick days can help reduce the spread of contagious illnesses and diseases and increase access to preventive care among workers and their families.¹ When workers without paid sick leave get sick, they face the impossible choice of going to work and potentially infecting others or staying home and risking losing their jobs. Employees who are sick and possibly contagious in the workplace enable the spread of illness among co-workers and customers alike, and the very industries and occupations that require frequent contact with the public are some of the least likely to provide paid sick days. This increases the chance of infectious diseases spreading through contact with food, co-workers and the general public – and it could threaten the productivity and safety of America's businesses. Paid sick days help to ensure workers can comply with science-based guidance on controlling the spread of an outbreak. According to a 2010 report, almost 26 million employed Americans age 18 and older may have been infected with the H1N1 influenza in 2009, and nearly eight million people took no time off work while infected.² Another recent study found that providing employees who have the flu with one or two days off could reduce workplace infections by up to 40 percent³ while another estimates that seasonal flu results in \$18.9 billion per year in indirect costs attributable to lost productivity.⁴

Providing workers time off to attend to their own and their family members' health care needs will also ensure a healthier and more productive federal contracting workforce. Paid sick days improve access to preventive care by giving employees the ability to take time to go to the doctor and to ensure their children get routine check-ups and immunizations. A 2012 report found from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that workers without paid sick time are less likely to get screened for cancer.⁵ There are clear signs that delaying or skipping necessary preventive care can result in poor health outcomes and more costly care for the American workers who lack paid sick days and their families.

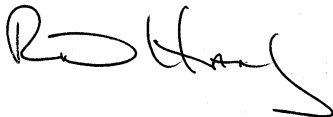
The proposed rule will directly benefit an estimated 828,000 employees of federal contractors, including an estimated 437,000 employees who currently receive no paid sick days. The proposed rule requires contractors to allow employees working on or in connection with a covered contract to accrue up to 56 hours of paid sick time annually to care for their own medical needs, a family member's medical needs, or for purposes related to domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking. These employees will join the approximately 10 million or more workers across the country who have or will soon have access to paid sick days as a result of laws that have been enacted in five states, the District of Columbia and more than 20 localities across the country.⁶

Paid sick days may also reduce the risk of workplace injuries. A study by researchers from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health at the CDC found that workers with access to paid sick time were 28 percent less likely than workers without access to paid sick time to be injured on the job.⁷ Paid sick days will therefore improve the economy and efficiency of federal contracting by decreasing the amount of worker time lost to contagious illness and workplace injuries.

Conclusion

We strongly support the proposed rule, which will ensure a healthier federal contracting workforce and a healthier economy. We applaud the Administration for leading the way on this issue and urge swift implementation of a final rule.

Sincerely,



Richard Hamburg
Interim President and CEO
Trust for America's Health

¹ Outbreaks: Protection Americans from Infectious Diseases. Trust for America's Health: 2015.
<http://healthyamericans.org/assets/files/TFAH-2015-OutbreaksRpt-FINAL.pdf>

² Drago, R. and Miller, K. "Sick at Work: Infected Employees in the Workplace During the H1N1 Pandemic." Institute for Women's Policy Research, February 2010. <http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/B284sick-atwork.pdf>

³ S. Kumar et al. Policies to Reduce Influenza in the Workplace: Assessments Using an Agent-Based Model. *American Journal of Public Health*: August 2013, Vol. 103, No. 8, pp. 1406-1411. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2013.301269

⁴ Mao et al, Annual economic impacts of seasonal influenza on US counties: Spatial heterogeneity and patterns. *International Journal of Health Geographics* 2012, 11:16.

⁵ Peipins LA, Soman A, Berkowitz Z, White MC. The lack of paid sick leave as a barrier to cancer screening and medical care-seeking: results from the National Health Interview Survey. *BMC Public Health* 2012;12(1):520.

⁶ National Partnership for Women & Families. (2016, March). *Paid Sick Days – State Statutes and City and County Laws*. Retrieved 14 March 2016, from <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-sick-days-statutes.pdf>

⁷ Asfaw, A., Pana-Cryan, R., & Rosa, R. (2012, September). Paid Sick Leave and Nonfatal Occupational Injuries. *American Journal of Public Health*, 102(9), e59-e64. Retrieved 15 March 2016, from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3482022/>