



H.B. 2137 – Delegate Guzman

“Until now, home care workers had no option but to keep working even when we were sick, injured, and exhausted on the frontlines of a pandemic.”

Thomasine Wilson, Home Care Chair of SEIU Virginia 512

Summary:

Approximately 30,000 home health care workers are now eligible for paid sick time off. These essential workers no longer have to choose between taking a sick day for themselves or their children and getting paid. The Home Health Care Workers Paid Sick Day Bill, sponsored by Delegate Guzman, creates a paid sick day standard to allow home health care workers to accrue one hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked up to 40 hours per year, for all workers who work on average at least 20 hours per week or 90 hours per month. Workers can use this leave for themselves or to care for sick family members.

The bill defines a home health care worker as “...an individual who provides personal care, respite, or companion services to an individual who receives consumer-directed services under the state plan for medical assistance services.” This definition may include but is not limited to workers employed in at-home hospice, home dialysis, or home infusion.

Benefits:

Paid sick days help workers take care of their short-term health needs including medical diagnosis, care, or treatment of a mental or physical illness, injury, or health condition. Paid sick days can also be used for the care of a family member such as a child or parent.

Businesses will benefit from higher employee productivity, healthier workplaces, and lower employee turnover. The pandemic has demonstrated just how critical it is that workers need to stay home if they are sick. Paid sick days will allow home health care workers to no longer be forced to go to work sick out of fear of not being able to pay their rent or feed their children, and infect coworkers and customers. Studies show that employees working while sick cost the national economy approximately \$160 billion per year.

Further Solutions:

Sixteen states have already passed paid sick day standards and most of them rank higher than Virginia in overall health outcomes. A recent poll from Christopher Newport University’s Wason Center shows that 88 percent of Virginians support a law that would require employers to provide five paid sick days per year to Virginia employees. Even before COVID-19, 41 percent of private sector workers, 1.2 million workers in Virginia, had no paid sick days or any paid time off. A study by Harvard University researchers shows that only one-third of Virginia service-sector workers at large employers have access to paid sick days. The lack of paid sick days creates a crisis for low-wage workers who must choose between taking a sick day for themselves or to care for a family member and getting paid.

Virginia can be both good for businesses and good for workers. The Virginians for Paid Sick Days Coalition will continue advocating for paid sick day legislation that benefits all workers in the Commonwealth.

Sources: Family Values @ Work, National Partnership for Women & Families, United Health Foundation, U.S Bureau of Labor & Statistics, YouGov American poll