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Paid Sick Leave Act Passes on Senate Floor

A healthy workplace is good for every New Mexican

Santa Fe, N.M. – Today, legislation guaranteeing earned sick leave for New Mexican workers passed on the Senate Floor on a (25-16) vote.

House Bill 20, **The Healthy Workplaces Act**, would require private employers to provide a minimum amount of earned sick leave, including leave for the care of family members. Employees would accrue one hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked, up to a maximum of 64 hours of leave accrued annually.

“This basic workplace protection has been a long time coming, but the need has never been greater,” said Senate President Pro Tem Mimi Stewart (D-Albuquerque), one of the bill’s sponsors. “The essential workers who we’ve depended on so much this last year are the least likely to have earned sick days available to them, and yet their health has been at great risk every day. It’s just not right for them to be forced to choose between going to work sick and putting food on the table or keeping their job.”

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Staying home when sick, or to assist a child or family member who is sick, is one of the best ways to avoid a worsening spiral of illness and associated healthcare costs. Without rest or adequate treatment, people become sicker and recovery time can increase dramatically. If the sick have no choice but to go to work, not only does productivity suffer but others will then be put at risk of infection.

Paid sick leave not only protects the public’s health. It also promotes the economic stability of employees and their families, and benefits businesses by increasing productivity and reducing employee turnover. “This is really a mutually beneficial proposition,” said fellow Democrat and bill supporter Senator Carrie Hamblen (D-Las Cruces). “Happier, healthier employees are more productive in their jobs. Businesses benefit by being able to offer this

for employee retention, a higher rate of productivity, and they can realize real bottom-line savings with less turnover and training costs. Plus, it's just the right thing to do." Hamblen adds, " I feel confident that what is being done in the Legislature to help our small businesses now and in the future will lessen the concerns about affordability and provide opportunities for our small businesses to further support their employees that are in many cases, their family."

Paid sick leave is provided in 15 other states and many other countries. In a recent statewide survey, 76% of New Mexicans indicated strong support for paid sick leave, including New Mexicans from both political parties and in both urban and rural communities across the state.

The Healthy Workplaces Act is sponsored by Rep. Christine Chandler (D-Los Alamos), Rep. Angelica Rubio (D-Las Cruces), Senate President Pro Tem Mimi Stewart (D-Albuquerque), Rep. Daymon Ely (D-Corralles), Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero (D-Albuquerque), and Rep. Linda Serrato (D- Santa Fe).

If enacted into law, the measure would go into effect in July of 2022.

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