



October 3, 2016

Members of the Finance Committee  
Cook County Board  
Submitted Electronically

Dear Members of the Finance Committee,

I am writing to ask for your support of the Cook County Earned Sick Time Ordinance, which is being considered in the Finance Committee on October 5<sup>th</sup>. The proposed ordinance is similar to the recently passed Chicago ordinance. We are asking you to stand up for Cook County's working families and to vote in favor of the Cook County Earned Sick Time Ordinance.

While most of us have the ability to use sick time in order to take care of ourselves, a child or a family member, many workers in Cook County do not enjoy that same luxury.

As a provider of women's health care at sixteen health centers in Illinois, seven of which are Cook County, we know how important it is for our patients to have the time necessary to address their health care needs. Lack of paid sick time can make it difficult for our patients to schedule and keep appointments that are essentials to their reproductive health. All women should have an annual exam as well as regular screenings for breast and cervical cancer. Many of our patients use birth control so that they can effectively plan their families. In addition, a great number of women use birth control to treat medical conditions such as endometriosis and anemia. This treatment help prevent debilitating symptoms and adverse impact on their overall health and even make them unable to work.

Unfortunately, when women cannot take time off from work without fear of lost pay or even firing, often they will postpone or forego necessary preventive health care. In the long run, this can very negatively affect her overall health and well-being.

The business community will tell you that this ordinance will put an undue burden on them and that it will cause them to move out of the county. We know that just the opposite is true. Studies have shown that employees who feel secure in their job to be able to take care of a sick family member actually are shown to grow the economy. They are able to take better care of themselves making themselves more productive. And, they feel more secure about spending money because they are not in fear of losing their jobs. These protections should be standard in Cook County and available to every employee.

The fears that this ordinance will lead to misuse of sick time among employees is completely unfounded. Within the ordinance, there are guidelines and restrictions put in place to ensure that the sick time is not abused. It is also important to note that this ordinance will only apply

to employers who do not already have a sick time or paid time off policy in place. This ordinance will not force employers to provide additional time off above what is already required in the ordinance. And the employer may take disciplinary action against an employee that abuses their earned sick time.

You have an opportunity to be a leader on this issue. Help us make Cook County an example for Illinois and the rest of the country. With this ordinance we have a chance to show that, in Cook County, we value the contributions that working families make to our economy. We can demonstrate that we take care of our own, and that employees who work in Cook County can be among the most productive and happy employees in the nation. Help us to set a new standard for employees in Cook County. Please vote YES on the Cook County Earned Sick Time Ordinance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Brigid Leahy".

Brigid F. Leahy  
Director of Public Policy