December 16th, 2021

Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California

Honorable Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Committee on Budget

Honorable Toni Atkins
President pro Tempore, California State Senate

Honorable Wendy Carillo
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 4

Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker, California State Assembly

Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

Honorable Senator Maria Elena Durazo
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 5

To: The California Legislature and Gov. Gavin Newsom

Dear Elected Leaders:

COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave has expired, but the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over, and paid sick leave continues to be necessary to protect public health. California is facing the newly-identified Omicron variant,¹ significant declines in vaccine effectiveness after six months,² the need for all adults to receive a booster shot,³ and an average of more than 3,600 confirmed COVID-19 cases per day⁴ -- all of which clearly demonstrate that COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave remains a necessary tool to contain the spread of COVID-19. We ask that you act now to extend supplemental paid sick leave through the pandemic in order to protect California’s families.

On March 19, 2021, Governor Newsom signed SB 95, which granted two weeks of emergency paid sick leave for COVID-19 to workers with employers who have 26 or more employees, effective through September 30, 2021. SB 95 arose during a surge of COVID-19 cases, at a moment when the previously-existing federal and state COVID-19 paid sick leave protections had lapsed, leaving most California workers with only three days of paid sick leave. As a result, workers were being forced to choose between going to work sick or contagious, thereby endangering their coworkers and customers, or staying home, and going without the pay their families desperately needed. Since September 30, 2021, workers have again been facing that same untenable choice.

In signing SB 95, Gov. Newsom stated, “Even as case rates and hospitalizations decline and vaccinations ramp up, we can’t let our guard down and must do all we can to stop this virus from

¹ https://www.who.int/news/item/28-11-2021-update-on-omicron
⁴ https://covid19.ca.gov/state-dashboard/
spreading.” Now, a new variant has appeared in our state, making the need for COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave clearer than ever.

COVID-19 is Still Present in Our Communities, But Workers Lack Protection to Follow Public Health Advice

The COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave expired on September 30, 2021, but COVID-19 has not gone away. California has now passed 4.8 million confirmed COVID-19 cases\(^5\) since the start of the pandemic. There is new evidence indicating that vaccine effectiveness declines significantly after six months,\(^6\) which has prompted the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to recommend that all adults receive a booster shot. Schools and daycare centers are open, but children under five still cannot be vaccinated. If schools are to remain open, parents and other caregivers of young children must be able to financially afford to keep them home if they have symptoms of COVID-19 or need to quarantine.

Many Californians are still getting sick and dying from COVID-19, and paid sick leave remains an essential tool to save lives. To date, more than 74,000 Californians have died from COVID-19.\(^7\) The fact is that paid sick leave saves lives. One study found that states whose workers newly gained access to paid sick leave through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act saw four hundred fewer confirmed cases per day, translating into approximately one case prevented for every 1,300 workers per day.\(^8\) If California does not take action to allow workers to follow public health advice and stay home when sick, quarantining, or caring for a family member with COVID-19, we can expect that COVID-19 will continue to spread needlessly.

The undersigned organizations respectfully request that the California Legislature and Governor take immediate action to extend emergency paid sick days to ensure that all workers can take time off without losing their job or pay when they are:

- infected with COVID-19;
- experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking a diagnosis;
- quarantining or self-isolating due to COVID-19;
- caring for a family member who has COVID-19 or must self-isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19;
- caring for a child whose school or daycare is closed due to COVID-19 on the premises;
- receiving the COVID-19 vaccine and booster or recovering from its side effects;
- taking a family member to get a vaccine or booster; or
- caring for a family member recovering from side effects of receiving a vaccine or booster.

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\(^5\) https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/ncov2019.aspx
\(^6\) https://www.phi.org/press/breakthrough-infection-study-compares-decline-in-vaccine-effectiveness-and-consequences-for-mortality/?mc_cid=3f6c621265&mc_eid=701ee9df78
\(^7\) https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/ncov2019.aspx
California needs to ensure that no worker has to choose between their income and protecting their family and community. When sick and exposed Californians are forced to go to work or school, we all suffer.

Limiting the spread of COVID-19 is the most important step California can take to protect its economy, but to the extent that small businesses are concerned about the costs of offering paid sick leave, the state has the resources to create a grant program to aid in offsetting those costs.

We ask that you take immediate action to ensure that sick and exposed workers can stay home without risking their jobs and their families’ economic security by continuing COVID-19 paid sick leave from October 2021. The spread of COVID-19 will not wait; we need action now.

Sincerely,

A Better Balance
AARP California
ACLU California Action
Asian American Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus
American Medical Women's Association (AMWA)
BARHII (Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative)
Bet Tzedek Legal Services
BreastfeedLA
Business & Professional Women of Nevada County
CA Association of Caregiver Resource Centers
California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform
California Catholic Conference
California Child Care Resource & Referral Network
California Employment Lawyers Association
California Immigrant Policy Center
California Labor Federation
California Nurse-Midwives Association
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
California Partnership to End Domestic Violence
California WIC Association
California Women's Law Center
California Work & Family Coalition
Caring Across Generations
Center for Parental Leave Leadership
Center for Workers' Rights
Centro Legal de la Raza
Child Care Law Center
Chinese Progressive Association
Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice
Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto
East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy EBASE
Electric Universe
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
Equal Rights Advocates
Evolve California
Family Caregiver Alliance, National Center on Caregiving
First 5 California
Flourishing Families Inc
Food Empowerment Project
Friends Committee on Legislation of California
Graton Day Labor Center
HAVEN (Healthy Alternatives To Violent Environments
Human Impact Partners
IFPTE Local 21
If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice
Inland Empire Breastfeeding Coalition
Inland Equity Partnership
Instituto de Educacion Popular del Sur de California
Jewish Center for Justice
Jobs with Justice San Francisco
LA Best Babies Network
La Raza Centro Legal
Legal Aid at Work
Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy
MACLA/Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana
Maintenance Cooperation Trust Fund
Mental Health America of Los Angeles
Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project
National Association of Social Workers (NASW) California Chapter
National Council of Jewish Women Los Angeles
National Employment Law Project
North Bay Labor Council
North Bay Jobs with Justice
Our Family Coalition
Orange County Equality Coalition
Pacific Yearly Meeting
Paid Leave for the US (PL+US)
Parent Voices
Project Sentinel
Public Counsel
Public Health Alliance of Southern California
Public Law Center
Prevention Institute
Rape Counseling Services of Fresno
Restaurant Opportunities Center (Worker's Rights and Workforce Development Center)
San Mateo Labor Council
Santa Clara County Wage Theft Coalition
SEIU California
Silicon Valley Rising Action
SoCalCOSH
Street Level Health Project
The Lactation Training Lab
UAW 2865
UAW Local 4123
UAW Local 5810
UFCW Western States Council
Women's Foundation California
Work Equity
Working Partnerships USA
Worksafe