

Paid Sick Leave Will Help Millennial Families Access Preventive Care

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Introduction

Even after the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), many young Americans are unable to utilize important preventive care services (e.g., well-women visits, cancer screenings, immunizations, sexually transmitted infection screenings and counseling¹) because they do not have the benefit of flexible workplace policies. The ACA increased access to preventive care by requiring most insurance plans to cover certain preventive services for free. For those without health insurance coverage, many community clinics offer preventive care on a free or sliding-scale basis. However, while the ACA removed the direct cost barriers to preventive care, a young adult today is still at risk of losing wages or being fired if they need to take time off of work to seek health care for themselves or a dependent child. As some of the least economically secure members of the workforce, access to paid sick time is crucial for young workers.² Alleviating such “indirect” costs associated with preventive care for Millennial working parents is critical to ensure that the improvements to preventive care access jump-started by the ACA become a reality for more Americans.

This paper will explore Millennials’ current lack of access to paid sick days and the ways that young families could benefit from guaranteed access to paid sick leave.

Millennial Access to Paid Sick Leave

Young adults between the ages of 18 and 34 are disproportionately less likely to have access to paid sick leave, as they are typically engaged in lower-paying or part-time jobs.³ A study found that 76 percent of workers between 18 and 25 years of age do not have paid sick time,⁴ roughly double the percent of private sector workers overall who do not have access to paid sick time

¹ E.g. Kaiser Family Foundation, Preventive Services Covered by Private Health Plans under the Affordable Care Act (Washington, DC: 2015), accessed July 7, 2016, <http://kff.org/health-reform/fact-sheet/preventive-services-covered-by-private-health-plans/>.

² See Tom Allison and Konrad Mugglestone, Where Do Young Adults Work? (Washington, DC: Young Invincibles, 2014), 5-6, <http://younginvincibles.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Where-Do-Young-Adults-Work-12.4.pdf>.

³ Center for American Progress, Promoting Good Jobs for Millennials (Washington, DC: 2013), accessed June 24, 2016, <https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Jobs4Millennials.pdf>.

⁴ See Center for American Progress, Promoting Good Jobs for Millennials (Washington, DC: 2013), 4, accessed June 24, 2016, <https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Jobs4Millennials.pdf>.

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(36 percent).⁵ Additionally, four in five part-time workers who work less than 20 hours a week and 70 percent of those working 20 to 34 hours per week do not have paid sick days, many of whom are young adults.⁶

In addition to low-wage and part-time workers, Hispanic workers and immigrant workers are two additional groups that are less likely to have access to paid sick time. Fifty-four percent of Hispanics and 49 percent of immigrants do not get paid sick days, compared to 37 percent of non-Hispanic whites and 38 percent of US-born adults, respectively.⁷ More than one in five young adults ages 18 to 34 are Hispanic, compared to 15 percent of adults ages 35 to 64.⁸ This means that young adults who are Hispanic and/or immigrants may be disproportionately negatively affected by the lack of a national paid sick leave law.

This lack of access to paid sick days comes at a time in young adults' lives when they may in fact need it the most. Eighty-three percent of new mothers are Millennials, and these young adults are now the largest cohort of parents with dependent children.⁹ When young parents do not have access to paid sick leave, not only their health, but also their children's health, is put at risk.

Current Paid Sick Leave Laws

While five states and 28 localities have taken steps to address the lack of access to paid sick time – and corresponding health and economic consequences – in their communities, local action may not be enough to address the large inequalities in access to paid sick time across the US workforce.

In all jurisdictions where paid sick days are the law, covered workers may take a paid sick day for the care of either themselves or a child. Five states have passed laws requiring employers to provide paid sick leave to employees: Connecticut (enacted in 2011), California (2015),

⁵ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States – March 2016. (Table 6) (Washington, DC: 2016), 15, accessed August 31, 2016, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ebs2.pdf>. Note the estimated percent of young adults without access to paid sick days is from 2013, while the percent of workers overall who do not get paid sick time is from 2016.

⁶ Jenny Xia, et al., Paid Sick Days Access and Usage Rates Vary by Race/Ethnicity, Occupation, and Earnings (Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR), 2016), 12, 14, <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/paid-sick-days-access-and-usage-rates-vary-by-race-ethnicity-occupation-and-earnings>.

⁷ Ibid., 2-3.

⁸ Data derived from the US Census Bureau, "Current Population Survey (CPS) Table Creator," data collected in 2015, <http://www.census.gov/cps/data/cpstablecreator.html>.

⁹ Young Invincibles, Working Millennials Would Benefit from Passage of the Healthy Families Act and the FAMILY Act (Washington, DC: 2015), <http://younginvincibles.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/YI-FAMILY-Healthy-Families.pdf>.

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Massachusetts (2015), Oregon (2016), and Vermont (2017).¹⁰ In addition, 26 cities, one county and the District of Columbia also passed paid sick leave legislation.¹¹

Although states are slowly recognizing the importance of paid sick leave laws, the lack of a national paid sick days law results in gaps that leaves 40 million private sector workers without access to paid sick time, forcing them to choose between seeking health care for themselves and their families or earning needed income.¹² For the lowest 10 percent of income earners, 72 percent of whom do not have paid sick days, this can be a cost-prohibitive choice.¹³ Young people aged 18 to 34 years old are disproportionately likely to be low-income workers, making up 70 percent of minimum wage earners.¹⁴ As a result, the workers most likely to make trade-offs between preventive health and earning a wage are young, low-income people.

Importance of Preventive Care

The ability to routinely access preventive care is important for young adults – and their children – to remain healthy. Preventive care can lead to early detection of health problems, improving health outcomes and reducing the economic burden of more serious or chronic illness.¹⁵ There are several screenings and immunizations that are particularly important to young adults ages 18 to 34, including the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine for young women, which can help prevent cervical cancer,¹⁶ and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) testing. In addition, early detection of cancers is one of the best ways to improve the rate of survival. Without annual visits to the doctor, Americans are at a greater risk of missing regular screenings that detect common cancers, such as cervical, breast, or testicular cancers, in time for early intervention.¹⁷ Healthy parents are also better able to care for their children; when they feel their best, they can provide the best for their families.

¹⁰ National Partnership for Women and Families (National Partnership), Paid Sick Days – State, District and County Statutes (Washington, DC: 2016), accessed June 23, 2016, <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-sick-days-statutes.pdf>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² United States Department of Labor, Get The Facts On Paid Sick Time (Washington, DC: 2015), 2, accessed June 22, 2016, <https://www.dol.gov/featured/paidleave/get-the-facts-sicktime.pdf>.

¹³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States – March 2016. (Table 6) (Washington, DC: 2016), 15, accessed August 31, 2016, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ebs2.pdf>.

¹⁴ Generation Progress, Economic Issues Millennials Should Care About This Election (Washington, DC: 2016), accessed June 24, 2016, <http://genprogress.org/voices/2016/03/30/42639/economic-issues-millennials-should-care-about-this-election/>

¹⁵ Michael V. Maciosek et al., “Greater Use Of Preventive Services In US Health Care Could Saves Lives At Little Or No Cost,” *Health Affairs* 29 (2010), <http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/29/9/1656.full>.

¹⁶ “What Can I Do to Reduce My Risk of Cervical Cancer?” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed July 10, 2016, http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/cervical/basic_info/prevention.htm.

¹⁷ Lucy A. Peipins, et al., “The Lack of Paid Leave as a Barrier to Cancer Screening and Medical Care-Seeking: Results from the National Health Interview Survey,” *BMC Public Health* 12 (2012), <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3433348/>.

The ability to access preventive care is not only important for individuals; it is also an important part of ensuring one's children receive the care they need. Millennials are the fastest growing cohort of new parents, with 83 percent of new babies in 2015 born to a mother between 18 and 34 years of age.¹⁸ All children, and particularly newborns, require frequent, routine check-ups with their doctors, and new parents must be able to take the time to ensure their children are attending such visits. When parents are unable to get their children the care they need, or be with their sick children, children have worse health outcomes.¹⁹ Under the ACA, a number of preventive services for children are available at no cost, including screening for autism and lead exposure, recommended immunizations, and hearing and vision screenings.²⁰

The recipients of preventive care are not the only beneficiaries. For example, there are broad benefits to society when people receive vaccinations for communicable diseases, especially if they are caught early. When children are vaccinated, they are less likely to contract and spread diseases that can be particularly harmful to children such as whooping cough or measles.²¹ Similarly, early detection of sexually transmitted infections can lower transmission rates through proper use of preventive strategies.²²

The Impact of Paid Sick Leave

Preventive care is central to ensuring long-term health and wellness for young adults and their children. Across the board, access to paid sick leave offers young workers better access to preventive care for themselves and their families. In addition, access to paid sick days has been shown to increase job satisfaction and to have positive economic effects. Specifically, paid sick leave has been shown to have the following positive impacts on people in the US seeking preventive care:

- Paid sick leave has been shown to increase use of preventive services – and reduce absences from work.

¹⁸ Young Invincibles, Working Millennials Would Benefit from Passage of the Healthy Families Act and the FAMILY Act (Washington, DC: 2015), <http://younginvincibles.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/YI-FAMILY-Healthy-Families.pdf>.

¹⁹ Jody Heymann and Alison Earl, Raising the Global Floor: Dismantling the Myth that We Can't Afford Good Working Conditions for Everyone (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 131, accessed June 27, 2016, https://athens.indymedia.org/media/old/raising_the_global_floor_dismantling_the_myth_that_we_can_t_afford_good_working_conditions_for_everyone__stanford_politics_and_policy_.pdf.

²⁰ "Preventive care benefits for children," U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, accessed July 10, 2016, <https://www.healthcare.gov/preventive-care-children/>.

²¹ "Five Important Reasons to Vaccinate Your Child," HHS, accessed July 11, 2016, https://www.vaccines.gov/more_info/features/five-important-reasons-to-vaccinate-your-child.html.

²² "How You Can Prevent Sexually Transmitted Diseases," CDC, accessed July 11, 2016, <http://www.cdc.gov/std/prevention/>.

- Working women were more likely to receive a Pap test when they had paid sick leave, and workers with paid sick leave were also more likely to receive an endoscopy.²³
- An analysis of California employees prior to the enactment of their paid sick days law found that 81 percent of those with paid sick leave had received a routine check-up within the previous two years, compared to 69 percent of those without paid sick days.²⁴ Another study found that employees with paid sick leave had visited a clinic or doctor's office at least once in the previous year at a margin 9 percent higher than their counterparts without paid sick leave.²⁵
- Another study found that employees with access to paid leave were 13 percent more likely to receive influenza vaccinations and predicted that universal paid leave would increase vaccinations by 1.6 million. This increase would result in 63,800 fewer absences from work and 18,200 fewer doctors visits for the flu.²⁶
- Paid sick leave is particularly important for young parents. Children require regular check-ups as well as unplanned doctors visits for illnesses. Parents who receive paid sick leave for the care of their children were nearly twice as likely to be very satisfied with their job than parents without it.²⁷ Paid sick leave also allows parents to take time off for themselves rather than hold on to sporadic paid time off to use when their children are in need.²⁸
- Paid sick leave can reduce emergency department visits and associated costs. Lack of paid sick leave often leaves Americans seeking care at emergency departments when preventable conditions spiral into more serious medical problems, or when they cannot seek care during typical work hours. Emergency department care comes at a significant

²³ Lucy A. Peipins, et al., "The Lack of Paid Leave as a Barrier to Cancer Screening and Medical Care-Seeking: Results from the National Health Interview Survey," *BMC Public Health* 12 (2012), <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3433348/>.

²⁴ Rajiv Bhatia, et al., A Health Impact Assessment of the California Healthy Families, Healthy Workplaces Act of 2008, Human Impact Partners and San Francisco Department of Public Health, 2008, 24, www.afpo.org.uk/resource/view.aspx?rid=54460.

²⁵ Peipins, "The Lack of Paid Leave as a Barrier to Cancer Screening and Medical Care-Seeking: Results from the National Health Interview Survey," <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3433348/>.

²⁶ Fernando A. Wilson, Yang Wang, and Jim P. Stimpson, "Universal Paid Leave Increases Influenza Vaccinations Among Employees in the U.S.," *Vaccine* 32 (2014), <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24631069>. See also Stefan Pichler and Nicolas Ziebarth, The Pros and Cons of Sick Pay Schemes: Testing for Contagious Presenteeism and Noncontagious Absenteeism Behavior, NBER Working Paper No. 22530 (2016), 4, accessed August 31, 2016, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w22530>.

²⁷ Kristin Smith and Andrew Schaefer, "Who Cares for the Sick Kids? Parents' Access to Paid Time to Care for a Sick Child," Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire, Issue Brief No. 51, Spring 2012, <http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1170&context=carsey>.

²⁸ Jason R. Woloski, et al., "Childcare Responsibilities and Women's Medical Care," *Journal of Women's Health, Issues and Care* 3 (2014), https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Candace_Robertson-James/publication/269551761_Childcare_Responsibilities_and_Women's_Medical_Care/links/56e6c4c308aedb4cc8af82e0.pdf.

cost. One study found that providing universal paid sick leave would reduce unnecessary emergency department visits by 1.3 million, thereby resulting in more than \$1 billion in health care savings.²⁹

Paid sick leave is clearly not just for use when employees need to recover from an illness; it also allows them to pursue preventive care – with significant positive consequences for themselves, their families, and society. For young workers, paid sick leave serves a crucial role in allowing them to establish positive health habits early in their and their children’s lives.

Recommendations

There is overwhelming bipartisan support among voting Americans for the enactment of paid sick leave laws. In fact, in a 2015 poll of likely voters, 88 percent supported ensuring all workers earn paid sick days to care for themselves and their families,³⁰ and a poll of Millennial women in 2016 found that 68 percent supported a requirement that employers allow workers to earn paid sick days.³¹ Moreover, another poll found that 82 percent of likely voters believe ensuring such regulations will be good for the economy.³² Even the business community is supportive, with 73 percent of executives expressing support for paid sick leave in a 2016 survey.³³

The following strategies would result in real policy changes and get closer to guaranteeing access to paid leave for all US employees, particularly young parents.

Pass the Healthy Families Act (S. 497/H.R. 932)

The Healthy Families Act (Act) is proposed legislation in the Senate and House of Representatives that would require all employers with 15 or more employees to allow an employee to earn one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked up to 56 hours, though an employer may offer more. The Act provides that employees may use the time to seek medical

²⁹ IWPR, Paid Sick Days and Health: Cost Savings from Reduced Emergency Department Visits (Washington, DC: 2011), accessed June 23, 2016, <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/paid-sick-days-and-health-cost-savings-from-reduced-emergency-department-visits>.

³⁰ Lake Research Partners, “Recent survey findings” (memo), January 15, 2015, accessed June 27, 2016, <http://www.makeitworkcampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MIW-SOTU-Poll-Memo.pdf>.

³¹ “New Data: Millennial Women: Meeting Them Where They Are,” American Women, accessed July 11, 2016, <http://www.americanwomen.org/research/millennial-women-meeting-them-where-they-are>.

³² Lake Research Partners, “Recent survey findings” (memo), January 15, 2015, accessed June 27, 2016, <http://makeitworkcampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MIW-SOTU-Poll-Memo.pdf>.

³³ Lydia DePillis, “Leaked documents show strong business support for raising the minimum wage,” The Washington Post, April 4, 2016, accessed July 11, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/04/04/leaked-documents-show-strong-business-support-for-raising-the-minimum-wage/>.

care for themselves or certain family members, including children and parents. One of the identified purposes of the Act is to ensure that employees are able to access routine, preventive care and therefore reduce health care costs.³⁴

A nonbinding vote on a similar resolution in the Senate in 2015 showed that a bipartisan, filibuster-proof majority of Senators support ensuring US employees have paid sick leave. While the vote was largely symbolic, it demonstrates the possibility of bipartisan (14 Republican senators joined 47 Democrats) support of legislation that would help to US workers.³⁵ Passing the Healthy Families Act would significantly increase the number of workers with access to paid leave, and, as a result, routine preventive care.

Pass State and Local Paid Sick Leave Laws

Many jurisdictions across the United States are working to pass state and local paid sick days legislation. Short of enacting a national measure, such as the Healthy Families Act, Americans should continue advocating at the local and state level for paid sick leave laws. As of last year, 28 jurisdictions had existing paid sick leave legislation or campaigns for the enacting of such legislation.³⁶

Conclusion

A nationwide paid sick leave mandate would go far to address the number of US residents who cannot access preventive care services because of economic and job insecurity. While young adults are the cohort least likely to have access to paid sick leave, they are arguably the group that needs it the most, due to their relative economic insecurity and the growing percentage of Millennial parents. Implementing a national paid sick leave requirement is the next logical step in fulfilling the ACA's promise of dramatically increasing the use of preventive care among adults and children. In order to support the economic viability of this generation as it begins its careers and families, paid sick leave should be available to every US worker.

³⁴ Healthy Families Act, H.R. 932, 114th Cong. §3(2) (2015), available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/932/>.

³⁵ Lydia DePillis, "In surprise show of support, filibuster-proof Senate majority backs paid sick leave," *Washington Post*, March 26, 2015, accessed June 27, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/03/26/in-surprise-show-of-support-filibuster-proof-senate-majority-backs-paid-sick-leave/>

³⁶ National Partnership, *State and Local Action on Paid Sick Days* (Washington, DC: 2015), accessed June 23, 2016, <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/campaigns/psd/state-and-local-action-paid-sick-days.pdf>