

January 16, 2023

Dear Chair McEwen and Members of the Senate Labor Committee:

My name is Adeline Wright and I am the president of Adeline, Incorporated in Duluth. **I'm writing to share my support for statewide Earned Sick and Safe Time (SF 34).** I opened my first salon in 2001 at the age of 24, and it has been a commitment of mine to be an employer who treats my workforce with dignity and equality. I am proud to now have four employees, all with paid sick time as well as access to full 100% employer covered premium medical, dental, vision and IRA.

From an early age, I was inspired by the character of Fezzywig from Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol. In the story, Fezzywig's generous and joyful business practices inspired trust, loyalty, and respect. I was also inspired by the family-owned businesses in my neighborhood who took great pride in providing solid benefits for their employees, many of whom still work for these same companies today. Adopting similar principles in my own business has made it possible not to just survive the 2008 recession and the COVID-19 pandemic, but also to thrive. I experience unmatched retention and performance as well as maintaining a loving and supportive work culture and work/life balance because I choose to put my employees first. It also directly supports the economic health of Duluth to do so.

Offering generous paid sick days, paid vacation time, and paid time off for mental health needs or to care for family members, has created a culture of respect and trust that permeates my business, contributing to both stability and growth. That being said, not all business owners will choose this path of generosity and care, even though all workers deserve these basic labor standards regardless of how generous or not their employer is choosing to be, or what city the workers happen to live in.

June of this year will mark my 22nd year in business and I have not seen any negative financial impact to my bottom line for providing paid sick and safe time. And this is not just my experience either. In a 2011 study of San Francisco employers, more than 89% did not report negative effects on profit due to the city's 2007 paid sick time law.

In fact, when I look around now, almost three years into this pandemic, the businesses in Duluth who supported passing our local earned sick and safe ordinance are the same businesses that are now prospering through this pandemic. They have consistently stood by their workers, and because of this, their employees feel valued and are invested in the health and well being of these businesses. I believe there is a connection here.

To stay financially secure, employers rely on great, healthy employees working to their full potential, yet some workplaces force employees to work even while the workers are sick. Forcing people to work while they are still sick leads to diminished productivity and the spread of infection. It also sends a message that the workers are machines and not human beings with lives, families, and inherent worth. I also believe that spreading illnesses to the public is much more costly to a business than offering paid sick time. In a 2013 CDC study, 49% of food workers who had worked at least one shift while sick with either vomiting or diarrhea, said that knowing they would not be paid if they stayed home influenced their decision to come to work while still sick.

Some employers already provide earned paid sick time, however 41 million workers in the US still lack

access to these benefits. We cannot rely on the goodness or generosity of individual employers because these values vary widely with both temperament and location. Only public policy can secure these benefits for every employee. And again, statistically we know that most businesses that already offer ESST do well not only ethically, but also financially. Earned sick and safe-time policies benefit both employees and the businesses' own financial bottom line.

Cities and states have been moving in the direction of providing earned sick and safe time, however access to sick time should not depend on which city you live in. Please support SF 34 (Pappas) for statewide ESST so all Minnesotans can thrive.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Adeline Wright  
President  
Adeline Incorporated