



Testimony in Support of S.F. 34 (Pappas) Earned Sick and Safe Time Provision
Senate Labor Committee
January 17, 2023

Chair McEwen and Members of the Committee:

The Minnesota Catholic Conference is the public policy voice for the Catholic Church in Minnesota. We write to express our support for S.F. 34 because we believe allowing employees to earn one hour of paid time sick and safe time for every 30 hours worked would not only help family life, but also send the message that children and families are real priorities within our society.

The employer/employee relationship is a reciprocal one, with both sides having responsibilities to each other. An employee is responsible for fulfilling their commitments to an employer by providing honest labor that produces quality goods or quality services. The employer is responsible for treating their employees justly and providing good work and fair pay that is consistent with each person's dignity and personal obligations to family. (Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church §§ 2427-36.)

Public policy should protect people who must take time away from their jobs to handle serious family obligations. Illness in one's life or family is inevitable. Caring for newborns, children, the sick, and the elderly is a privileged place in which we grow in our own humanity. It is an integral part of family life that must be honored.

Working people need the security to know that they have at least some time to recover from illness or care for family members without forfeiting their means of sustenance. Unfortunately, too many working people are forced to make impossible financial choices between caring for a loved one and missing a paycheck or even getting fired. This dilemma disproportionately impacts hourly wage earners who fill roles that we have come to define as essential.

According to federal data, while 96 percent of the country's highest-paid workers receive paid sick leave, only 40 percent of the lowest earners do^[i]. A 2021 survey conducted by Harvard's Shift Project revealed that many of the roughly 6,600 hourly low-wage workers surveyed didn't even have \$400 in emergency funds. It's worth noting that parents who work low-wage jobs are now even more financially strapped due to the expiration of the expanded federal Child Tax Credit—which had put a few hundred dollars in families' pockets every month.^[ii]

We encourage you to protect families by aligning our state's employment laws with the common good. Please vote AYE on favorable passage of S.F.34. We are grateful for your service to the people of Minnesota.

^[i] https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/ebs2_09222022.htm

^[ii] <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-workers-must-choose-between-staying-home-and-being-paid-omicron/>