

**Testimony of Cary Brown, Executive Director of the Vermont Commission on Women
House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs
February 4, 2014**

RE: H208, an act relating to absence of work for health care and safety

Women are disproportionately impacted by a lack of paid sick leave. They are **over-represented in low-wage jobs**, which are less likely to offer paid sick leave, **they assume more of the responsibilities for care of children** and other family members, and **they are more likely to be the victims of domestic and sexual violence** and to need access to the services that can help keep them safe and in the workforce.

Women are disproportionately affected by lack of paid sick leave because they are more likely than men to work part-time and to be in low-wage jobs.

- In 2011, 27 percent of employed women usually worked part time—that is, fewer than 35 hours per week. In comparison, 11 percent of employed men usually worked part time.¹
- One strategy about half of married couples use to help manage their overall work and family responsibilities is to have one parent, typically the mother, cut back the time they spend in the paid workforce. However, approximately three-fourths of married mothers who work part-time still miss work when their child is sick, and only 29 percent have access to paid sick days.²
- 82% of workers making \$8.25 per hour or less (most of whom are women) don't have access to paid sick days. (62% of minimum wage jobs are held by women).³
- In 2010, the working-poor rate (the ratio of the working poor to all individuals in the labor force for at least 27 weeks) was higher for women than for men—7.6 percent, compared with 6.7 percent.⁴
- More than half of working mothers (54 percent) do not have even a few paid sick days they can use to care for their sick children.⁵

¹U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Women in the Labor Force: a Databook." Report 1040, February 2013.

²Kristin Smith & Andrew Schaefer, "Who Cares for the Sick Kids? Parents' Access to Paid Sick Time to Care for a Sick Child." Carsey Institute, Issue Brief No. 51, Spring 2012.

³Women in Poverty: An American Crisis. Stories from the 2014 Shriver Report.
<http://www.theatlantic.com/specialreport/shriverreport>

⁴U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Women in the Labor Force: a Databook." Report 1040, February 2013.

⁵Institute for Women's Policy Research. (2011, March). Paid Sick Day Access Rates by Gender and Race/Ethnicity.

Because women bear the brunt of caregiving responsibilities, working women are disproportionately impacted by a lack of paid sick leave.

Access to paid sick leave is particularly important for working women because of the double burden they face – both self-care and care for an ill child or an aging relative.

Caring for children:

- 74 percent of all employed mothers report staying home from work when their child is sick, compared to 40 percent of all employed fathers.⁶
- Being married does not offset this imbalance: Among married mothers employed full-time who have a spouse working full-time, 73 percent miss work when their child is sick, compared to 40 percent of full-time working fathers with a full-time working spouse.⁷
- 80 percent of mothers assume primary responsibility in the family for taking their children to doctor's appointments.⁸
- Half of all working mothers who do stay home with children when they are sick report that they do not get paid when they must do so.⁹
- 49% of women report that they have lost pay or promotions or have struggled to keep their jobs because of the need to care for sick children, while only 28% of men report the same.¹⁰
- Job losses among low-income American women are most frequently reported to be the result of the birth or illness of a child.¹¹

Caring for aging relatives:

- Women make up more than 2/3's of adults providing substantial assistance to aging parents¹², averaging 23 hours a week providing care.¹³
- Women who provide care to aging parents curtail their hours of paid work by an average of 43% in order to provide this care.¹⁴
- We can expect that this will be a growing issue, because the population in Vermont is aging more rapidly than in the rest of the country. From 2000 to 2010, the percentage of Vermonters over the age of 65 grew by 17.5%, compared to 15.1% nationally, and compared to a growth of just 2.8% in the total population of the state.¹⁵

Caring for their own health care needs:

- There are an estimated 4,400 births and adoptions each year to women employed in Vermont, and about 800 of these women currently lack paid vacation and sick leave.¹⁶

⁶ Kristin Smith & Andrew Schaefer, "Who Cares for the Sick Kids? Parents' Access to Paid Sick Time to Care for a Sick Child." Carsey Institute, Issue Brief No. 51, Spring 2012.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, "Women, Work, and Family Health: A Balancing Act." Issue Brief, April 2003.

⁹ Expanding Access to Paid Sick Leave: The Impact of the Healthy Families Act on America's Workers. March 2010. U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee.

¹⁰ Forbes, U.S. Far Behind in Workers' Rights, 2009

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Richard W. Johnson and Joshua M. Wiener, "A Profile of Frail Older Americans and their Caregivers," Urban Institute, The Retirement Project Occasional Paper Number 8, February 2006 Table

¹³ Charles R. Pierret, "The 'sandwich generation': women caring for parents and children," *Monthly Labor Review*, September 2006, Table 2

¹⁴ Richard W. Johnson and Joshua M. Wiener, "A Profile of Frail Older Americans and their Caregivers," Urban Institute, The Retirement Project Occasional Paper Number 8, February 2006 Table

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census Briefs. The Older Population: 2010.

¹⁶ Institute for Women's Policy Research, "Valuing Good Health in Vermont: The Costs and Benefits of Earned Health Care Time." Briefing Paper #B320, April 2013.

Women are more likely to be the victims of domestic and sexual violence.

- 1 in 4 women have been the victim of severe physical violence by an intimate partner compared to 1 in 7 men.¹⁷
- Approximately 37% of women seeking injury-related treatment in hospital emergency rooms were there because of injuries inflicted by a current or former spouse or partner.¹⁸
- In the U.S., 1 in 5 women will be raped at some point in their lives, compared to 1 in 71 men.¹⁹
- In Vermont, it has been estimated that 1 out of 7 adult women has been a victim of rape sometime in her lifetime.²⁰
- In Vermont, it's estimated that there are about 224 individuals who are victims of domestic violence and do not have access to paid leave of any kind. About 28% of victims of violence take time off from work because of their experience of violence, so it's estimated that about 70 additional people would use paid leave if they had access to it.²¹

¹⁷ The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010.

¹⁸ Rand, M. Violence-Related Injuries Treated in Hospital Emergency Room Departments; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997.

¹⁹ 2011 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.

²⁰ 2003. Rape in Vermont: A Report to the State, Kilpatrick and Ruggiero.

²¹ Institute for Women's Policy Research, "Valuing Good Health in Vermont: The Costs and Benefits of Earned Health Care Time." Briefing Paper #B320, April 2013.