

My line of work is food service. Not having paid sick leave is a public health issue. I've gone to work sick because if I can get out of bed and go to work, then I'm not going to take the day off. I have to go into work sick because I need all the hours I can get, especially in the winter when hours are being cut and my gas bill is really high. This situation is bad for me, it's bad for the people I work with and it's bad for the people I serve.

It's not always just the pay, either. The process of asking for sick leave always felt adversarial. It felt like it wasn't okay with my boss. One day I woke up with really severe food poisoning and I called my boss as early in the morning as I possibly could and I felt like I was being scolded. Having paid sick days would ease that interaction with my boss.

I was the only one who could do my job, which made taking any time off really difficult. My work had a policy of giving 1 week of vacation after 1 year of work but no one else could do my job so I worked for 2 years without taking any vacation. The lack of paid sick days has a negative mental and emotional impact on the job. You're made to feel like you're letting down your fellow employees, and it pits you against everyone you're working with. Then you feel like you have to explain yourself that you're really sick - that's not conducive to a good relationship or good work environment if you feel defensive and guilty when you don't feel well. And I've noticed myself getting like that when other coworkers take time off when they're sick and that's not a great environment to work in...and we're set up to think that way.

I believe that earned sick leave is vitally important for improving working conditions and because it's a public health issue.