

VERMONT

SMOKE & CURE™

January 19, 2016

Dear Vermont Senate Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs Committee,

I write to express my support for H. 187, which requires a minimum paid sick leave for Vermont workers. I'm sorry that my travel schedule prohibits me from attending and answering your questions.

Paid sick leave is a public health issue and the bill is written to minimize negative impacts on Vermont businesses. It isn't the perfect bill, but it sets a floor that represents an important step in the right direction.

Vermont Smoke and Cure has offered at least 10 days of paid leave (for sick or vacation), which start to accrue after 60 days, plus 5 paid company holidays, since before 2005, and from when we had just 12 employees. As a food processor, we can't have employees working who are sick. We consider this a fundamental benefit, not as generous as many, but a good baseline.

We all get sick and need to take time off to get well and to avoid making other people sick if we have an infectious illness. It would be good public health policy to prevent people from being forced to decide whether they should forego wages or stay home to get healthy and prevent risk of infecting everyone else in the workplace.

This bill would not create a competitive problem for Vermont companies.

- The bill would result in only a minor cost to the company – 5 days, or less than 2% of wage cost after full implementation. The bill allows a 2-year ramp-up period at 3 days, or less than 1.2% cost.
- Despite that only three other states and 18 of the largest cities (almost all of them with larger populations than Vermont) require paid sick time, evidence shows that this level of PTO will not create a cost disadvantage. Without extrapolating too far, logic suggests that the potential results of the bill, to lessen infection of others by those coming to work sick, may result in a positive benefit of reducing sick days overall and of reducing people coming to work sick.
- This bill does not encroach upon businesses who offer more paid days off as a competitive benefit.
- It includes a significant trial or waiting period of 90 days to be able to use sick days.

The benefits of this bill to everyone in Vermont to guarantee all employees paid sick leave, and in particular to the 57,000 Vermonters who lack it currently, vastly outweigh the costs. I encourage you to pass this bill. Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Christopher L. Bailey
CEO
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