

Alaska Public Health Association — Policy Resolution Supporting State Mandated Paid Sick Leave

Whereas, in November 2024 Alaska voters approved *Ballot Measure 1*, which establishes a statewide paid sick leave requirement effective July 1, 2025: employers must allow employees to accrue one hour of sick leave per 30 hours worked; employers with 15 or more employees must permit up to 56 hours of sick leave use per year, while employers with fewer than 15 employees are required to provide up to 40 hours per year.¹

Whereas, the law expressly allows employees to use paid sick leave not only for their own illness, injury, preventive care, or to receive care or help for issues related to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking, but also to provide care or assistance to a *family member* who experiences any of these health needs, thereby extending paid sick leave protections to workers responsible for caring for sick loved ones.²

Whereas, prior to this law, Alaska had no state requirement for paid sick leave; the measure thus extends benefits to many workers who previously lacked any guaranteed paid sick time.

Whereas, according to the U.S. Small Business Administration, a substantial share of Alaska’s small businesses operate in industries with heavy public interaction: among Alaska firms with 1–19 employees, about one-third are in accommodation and food services, retail, or health care and social assistance; and among Alaska businesses with 500 or fewer employees, 44 percent are in those same three sectors.³

Furthermore, to reduce disease spread, the Alaska Public Health Association previously passed a resolution (2021-01) recommending that Alaska support employers in offering paid sick leave to employees who are symptomatic or have been exposed to COVID-19.⁴

Whereas, universal access to paid sick leave protects the public’s health by reducing “presenteeism” (coming to work when sick) and encouraging sick workers to stay home; research shows such policies reduce workplace transmission of infectious diseases and increase self-quarantining.^{5,6}

Whereas, paid sick leave strengthens the health and economic stability of Alaska workers—particularly part-time, seasonal, low-wage, and marginalized workers—who are least likely to have benefits and most vulnerable to income disruptions.

Whereas, minimizing contact between sick employees and the public reduces community-wide risks of influenza-like illness and other communicable diseases.⁷

Whereas, paid sick leave benefits workplaces by reducing productivity loss from working while ill, lowering turnover, and improving morale, with modest costs relative to these gains.⁸

Whereas, evidence from states with paid sick leave mandates shows no significant negative impacts on business operations, wages, or employment, and in some cases positive economic outcomes.^{8,9,10}

Whereas, Alaska’s seasonal industries, part-time workforce, and rural, remote, Alaska Native, immigrant, and low-income communities make equitable access to paid sick leave particularly critical.

Whereas, supporting paid sick leave is a public health measure that reduces the transmission of communicable disease and enables workers to prioritize health without risking financial instability.

Therefore, Let It Be Resolved, that the Alaska Public Health Association:

1. **Affirms strong support** for the ongoing, full and effective implementation of Alaska’s paid sick leave law, including enforcement, outreach, and education.
2. **Urges** the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development to provide clear, accessible guidance—particularly for part-time, seasonal, low-wage, rural, Alaska Native, immigrant, and marginalized workers—to ensure broad understanding and consistent compliance.
3. **Calls on** employers to communicate paid sick leave policies in culturally and linguistically matched ways and foster workplace cultures where sick workers feel safe staying home.
4. **Encourages** the Alaska Department of Health to treat paid sick leave as a core public health initiative, partnering with Labor to promote education, integrate sick leave awareness into health equity programs, and reduce disease transmission risk.
5. **Endorses** continued monitoring of the law’s public health, economic, and equity impacts, and supports collaboration among public health agencies, researchers, and community partners to collect and share data.
6. **Commits to raising awareness among policymakers** of any efforts to weaken or undermine the paid sick leave law and **urges policymakers to reject such efforts** in order to safeguard the health of workers and communities.

References

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2. Alaska State Legislature. (n.d.). *Alaska Statutes § 23.10.067*. <https://www.akleg.gov/basis/statutes.asp#23.10.067>
3. U.S. Small Business Administration, Office of Advocacy. (2023). *2023 small business economic profile: Alaska*. <https://advocacy.sba.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2023-Small-Business-Economic-Profile-AK.pdf>
4. Alaska Public Health Association. (n.d.). *Resolutions*. <https://www.alaskapublichealth.org/resolutions>

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6. Callison, K., & Pesko, M. F. (2022). The effect of paid sick leave mandates on coverage, work absences, and presenteeism. *Journal of Human Resources*, 57(4), 1178–1208.
7. Anderson, D. M., & Bodvarsson, Ö. B. (2020). (Article corresponding to DOI). *Public Administration Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22284>
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9. Pichler, S., & Ziebarth, N. R. (2020). Labor market effects of U.S. sick pay mandates. *Journal of Human Resources*, 55(2), 611–659.
10. Asfaw, A., Rosa, R., & Pana-Cryan, R. (2017). Potential economic benefits of paid sick leave in reducing absenteeism related to the spread of influenza-like illness. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 59(9), 822–829.