

**Testimony on Behalf of the National Organization for Women
New York City Chapter**

On

**Earned Paid Sick Time Law
Intro 1059
November 17, 2009**

Good afternoon. Thank you for this opportunity to testify about the critical issue of paid sick time for New York City workers.

My name is Sonia Ossorio, and I am the President of NOW-NYC, testifying on behalf of the National Organization for Women of New York City.

This issue of paid sick days is one of paramount importance to women, and that's because it is women who bear the weight of caregiving responsibilities—whether it's caring for a sick child or a sick parent or family member. In fact, we know that at least 75% of caregivers are women. We need a policy in place that ensures these workers are protected.

We also know that a major contributor to the wage gap for women workers is the discrimination that persists against mothers and caregivers for the perception—not the reality—that these workers are less capable, less productive, or less committed. In fact, women are passed over for promotions, pay raises, and other on-the-job opportunities because of these unfair assumptions. As a result, women still earn less, dollar per dollar, than men. We need a policy in place that will treat all workers fairly.

Currently only 35% of full-time employees with sick days are permitted to use them to care for a sick child, much less a sick parent. Of even more concern is that women, particularly low-income women, are overrepresented in many of the fields where paid sick time is unavailable for any reason—such as retail, as child care, and the restaurant industry. We need a policy in place to change the way women in women-dominated industries are treated.

When women, who are society's caregivers, are forced to choose between a day's pay and caring for a child, this is discrimination. It's pay inequality, and it's women and their families that lose.

This law will offer critical protections for workers and for women so that they can care for their families without being penalized at work. By instituting a workplace policy that includes paid sick days and paid sick days that can be used for oneself or to care for a family member, employers can help diminish the discrimination that exists against those who have caregiving responsibilities, and make it easier for their workers to stay healthy. Furthermore, it will protect families from losing critical wages and from needing to put their jobs on the line when someone gets sick—which is particularly important in this difficult economy.

On behalf of the girls and women of New York City, the National Organization for Women-New York City urges the passage of the New York City Earned Sick Time Law, which would allow paid sick days for time off to deal with domestic violence, the care of an ill spouse, child, parent, grandparent and domestic partner.

A key provision of this law is that it prohibits retaliation or any other penalty for taking sick leave. This provision is very important. We have seen all too often women who have been fired or demoted when they have brought to light issues of workplace unfairness.