



Good morning Chair Doherty and members of the committee. For the record, my name is Caitlin Baggott, and I am the Executive Director of the Bus Project. The Bus Project engages young people as volunteers on issues that matter to our generation. We work in 13 counties, from Clatsop to Polk and Umatilla, and from Benton to Lane. In these communities all over Oregon we work with high school students, recent college graduates and young professionals who aspire to make an impact in their hometowns, start businesses, run for school board, or someday, to serve in these halls.

Nearly a million young people, aged 16 to 34, live, work, play -- and vote -- in Oregon, about a third of the state's overall population, and I'm here today because Earned Sick Days is an issue that young people in Oregon care about.

And for good reason. When you hear the statistic that 80% of all low-wage workers do not have access to earned sick days -- this is a fact of life primarily for young workers. Most low-wage and service-sector jobs are held by young workers.

Young workers bear a heavy burden when they are not afforded the basic ability to earn time off to take care of an illness, or to care for a sick child or parent. What this means is that young workers are both less likely to have earned sick days and also less likely to be able to afford unpaid time off. They have limited economic flexibility as few have created a financial safety net so early in their careers.

Some may imagine at this point in their life, in their teens and twenties, that young people have less responsibility or are supported by parents. This is not the case. In 2010, people under the age of 35 represented $\frac{1}{3}$ of the overall work force. And they're not working to buy lattes and concert tickets. They're saving to start a family or care for the family they have. They're saving to buy a house or start a business. In Oregon, the average age of motherhood is 25. These are not young people with no responsibilities. These are young workers with significant and often overwhelming responsibilities. Working and raising a family without the ability to earn time off when illness strikes can have a lifelong negative impact on both the parent and the child.

Right now, the system disadvantages an already struggling demographic who make up the majority of the low-wage workforce. Earned sick days provides a cushion for those facing incredibly tough choices between their health, their child, or their job.

The financial health of the next generation is not simply about the ability of specific young people to scrape by and make ends meet during hard times. We also need to look at the future health of the state. For the first time in US history, next generation is projected to be less well-off financially than those that came before. Another way of putting this is that in two, three and four decades, Oregon will be less well off financially than at any prior time in our history. Because the next generation is, quite simply, the future of the state.

Earned sick days does not solve all of this problem, but it is an important step. The policy requirements for Oregon businesses are small compared to the positive impact that would result: improved public health, productivity and job stability, and improved economic security.

I urge you to support the next generation of this state by supporting this common sense public interest policy. Thank you for your time.