



**Testimony in Support of Paid Sick and Safe Days (SB 454 & HB2005)  
Before the  
Senate Workforce and House Business and Labor Committees  
February 16, 2015  
Submitted by: Deborah Steinkopf**

Chairs Michael Dembrow and Paul Holvey  
Senate Workforce and House Business & Labor Committee  
Oregon State Legislature

Chairs Dembrow and Holvey and members of the Senate Workforce Committee and House Business and Labor Committee:

On behalf of Bradley Angle, I testify today to draw attention to the impact that domestic and sexual violence has on the health of our workplaces and communities, and to urge your support of the proposed paid sick and safe days bill (SB 454 and HB2005). Thank you for your work and leadership, and for the opportunity to submit testimony.

**Domestic and sexual violence are serious public health issues that impact Oregon families and children in profound ways.** Over 37% of Oregonians report having experienced rape, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner. Here in Portland, domestic violence accounts for nearly 50% of simple assaults and over 30% of aggravated assaults, according to the Portland Police Bureau. In some cases, domestic violence is fatal. Since 2009, there have been more than 100 domestic violence related deaths (men, women, and children) in Oregon.

**Domestic violence doesn't just impact individuals and families. It affects our workplaces too.** A recent survey of Oregon victims revealed that 69% were employed at the time they were suffering abuse (Glass, et al., 2010). In one survey, nearly all the survivors surveyed – 96 percent – reported that domestic abuse affected their ability to perform their job duties. Businesses pay a high price. The annual cost to businesses of lost productivity due to domestic violence is estimated at \$900 million, and in Oregon, include approximately \$9.3 million in lost productivity from paid work for victims of nonfatal intimate partner violence (Oregon Department of Humans Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Epidemiology).

Victim service providers across the state have developed partnerships with law enforcement, medical care, and other service and response systems to provide a coordinated community response to help victims become survivors. An earned sick and safe day standard will further this goal by helping victims in our community survive violence, protect their children, and contribute to our neighborhoods.

Earned safe days will help survivors achieve safety. It is essential that survivors are able to take safety steps right away, when necessary to prevent further abuse. Survivors of domestic violence are at an increased risk of harm shortly after separation from an abusive partner.

At the same time, it is essential that victims preserve their economic security. Economic independence is a primary indicator of whether a victim will be able to maintain safety from abuse. Sabotage of employment is a strategy by the abusive partner to control and potentially escalate the violence with serious negative consequences for health and safety (McFarlane et al., 2003). Victims of domestic violence often stay with their abuser because they are financially dependent on that person.

Without access to earned paid leave, Victims are in an untenable catch-22. They need economic security as well as safety assistance, and are unable to protect one without undermining the other.

**Earned sick and safe days will help co-workers, employers, and communities by preserving safe, healthy workplace environments.**

It is in the public interest to reduce domestic and sexual violence by enabling victims to seek safety and redress the effects of violence without jeopardizing their economic security. The proposal has important safeguards to ensure that it works well for employers as well as for employees. For the foregoing reasons, we urge your support of SB 454 and HB2005.

Thank you for your leadership and work, and please do not hesitate to contact us if you feel I or my staff can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah Steinkopf". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Deborah Steinkopf, MSW, MA  
Executive Director