



February 16, 2015

To: Senate Workforce Committee
From: Jim Houser, Co-Owner, Hawthorne Auto Clinic
Re: Support of SB454

Dear Chair Dembrow and Committee Members,

My name is Jim Houser and my wife and I own and operate Hawthorne Auto Clinic in SE Portland. I am also Co-chair of the Main Street Alliance of Oregon. I support SB 454.

Let me tell you about small business's stake in this Paid Sick Time campaign. Hawthorne Auto Clinic is celebrating its 32nd anniversary this month, so I think I know a thing or two about small business success.

Our principle business asset, next to our customers, is our employees. I believe, and experience has borne me out, that if you take care of your employees they will take care of you. We provide good benefits, including paid sick days - now called personal days - and have for all of our 32 years. The average tenure of our 9 full-time employees is 17 years. That kind of employee loyalty is critical to the success of any small business.

Most small business people understand this basic business reality. The biggest hurdle small business owners face in being able to provide decent wages and benefits is competition with national chains, like McDonalds and Wal-Marts, who are notorious for driving down the cost of labor (i.e. suppressing wages and benefits). As much as we would like not to be, small business owners are often trapped by the power of the multinationals.

Reasonable employment standards, like paid sick time level the business playing field by requiring all employers to play by the same rules, enabling small business owners to do what they know needs to be done, like providing paid sick time for employees, for their enterprises to thrive.

For all of our 32 years we have offered 5 paid sick days (now called personal time). Because I realize there is some anxiety among business owners over this proposal, I inventoried our employee's "personal day" usage over the past year. The average usage was just 2.7 days. The cost to our company was less than 1% of payroll.

Let me close by sharing one of the more heart-warming moments of the Paid Sick Days campaign in Portland, which occurred just after our city council had passed the new ordinance. Our group of jubilant small business owners was headed for the city hall exit when we were approached by a teary-eyed, smiling front desk guard. She gave each of us a big hug as she explained that over her many years on the job she had never been able to take a paid sick day. She wanted us to know how grateful she was.

Like I said, I believe that if we take care of our employees, they will take care of us, and our businesses will grow and prosper. At the end of the day, "Paid Sick Days" is really just a basic

employment standard, like worker's compensation, minimum wage, or our child labor rules. That's why I supported increased access to earned sick leave in Portland. That is why I support Paid Sick Days for all of Oregon. It's not only the smart thing to do; it is the right thing to do.

Thank you.

Jim Houser
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