



To: House Business and Labor and Senate Workforce committees
From: Oregon Health Equity Alliance
Date: February 16, 2015
Re: HB 2005 and SB 454

Chair Holvey, Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Health Equity Alliance (OHEA) would like to express our support for HB 2005 and SB 454. OHEA represents a collective effort of 37 member organizations who work together to make Oregon a more equitable place for all. Our coalition believes every Oregonian should have an equal chance to achieve their full health potential, and that is why we are supporting HB 2005 and SB 454.

HB 2005 and SB 454 will create a statewide standard that allows all Oregonians to earn sick time while working. Almost half of Oregonians working in the private sector don't earn a single hour of paid sick time while they work. Of those, some groups are less likely to have access to paid sick time and are more challenged by not having it than others: people of color, low-wage earners, and single parents are most affected by not having access to paid sick time to handle the inevitable illness or sick child.

For too many workers, even a few days of lost pay can equate to an entire monthly grocery bill or health care budget. In the current economic climate, in which 30% of Latinos, African-Americans and Native Americans in Oregon are living in poverty, job-protected paid sick time is vital to the economic security of our families of color.

It is especially urgent that we establish this policy now, when the effects of recession are still hurting so many Oregon families -- and hurting our low-wage workers and families of color the most. More than ever, people need the very basic labor standards that help them keep their jobs, support their families, stay healthy, and prevent poverty. Paid sick time is one of those basic standards that Oregon workers should be able to count on when they become ill -- as we all do.

OHEA urges your full support of HB 2005 and SB 454. Thank you for your commitment to our communities.

Kayse Jama, Executive Director, Center for Intercultural Organizing, OHEA Member