



Study: N.J. workers, firms benefit from paid sick leave

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[TRENTON](#) — Providing paid sick leave for all New Jersey workers would provide public health benefits as well as financial benefits for businesses, a study found.

Rutgers University's Center for Women and Work, which released the study findings today, found more than 1.2 million private sector workers in New Jersey don't get paid sick days.

If ailing workers know they can stay home and still be paid, they'll be able to get earlier and preventive health care and would be more likely to avoid costly visits to hospital emergency rooms, its authors concluded. They said that would reduce health care costs and allow workers to return to the job sooner.

"People without paid sick leave often have to choose between going to work sick and paying their bills. This highlights a disconnect between common sense measures that can aid public health and current policies," said Jonathan Heller of Human Impact Partners, a California-based organization focusing on health issues. "We must not only see (providing paid sick days) as good labor policy, but as good public health policy."

Proponents say they're not aware of any lawmakers who are planning to introduce such legislation, though they remain hopeful it will get more attention in the near future.

But the New Jersey Business and Industry Association says mandating paid sick leave would have a "serious, negative effect" on small businesses.

"Most large firms already provide it, so it really is a small business issue. And most small businesses either can't afford to do it or don't have enough people to cover shifts that need to be covered or perform duties that need to be done," associated President Phil Kirschner said. "Small companies also tend to be more flexible on these matters, so not providing paid sick days doesn't mean they don't accommodate employees when they're sick."