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ALERT

CONNECTICUT APPROVES PAID SICK LEAVE FOR SERVICE WORKERS

By Donia F. Sawwan

State legislators approved a bill on June 4, 2011, to make Connecticut the first state to require paid sick leave for its service workers. This victory for workers marks a growing national trend. Currently, only San Francisco and Washington, DC, have mandatory paid sick time. Lawmakers in Massachusetts and California, as well as municipal officials in Philadelphia, Seattle and Denver are also considering paid sick days legislation.

The bill approved in Connecticut, which only applies to businesses with 50 or more employees, allows workers to accrue one hour of sick time for every 40 hours worked, with the number of days capped at five per year. It targets the service industry, where many employees handle food and work with the public, and exempts manufacturing companies and nationally chartered nonprofit organizations, day laborers, independent contractors and temporary workers. In addition, the paid leave would only apply to service workers who receive an hourly wage, such as waiters, waitresses, cashiers, cooks, hair stylists, security guards and nursing home aides. It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of service workers will be affected. The bill passed on a 76 to 65 vote by the House following more than 11 hours of debate. It had already been approved by an 18 to 17 vote in the Senate on May 25. The bill now moves to Governor Dannel P. Malloy's desk. Malloy, who campaigned on the issue during last year's election, has said that he will sign it into law.

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