



AN INITIATIVE OF

the de Beaumont Foundation + Kaiser Permanente

# Earned Sick Leave

## POLICY BREAKDOWN

“That means our most vulnerable people, those working our lowest wage jobs, have to choose between getting well, getting food on the table or caring for a sick child. When the rubber hits the road, people have no choice but to go to work when they’re sick or send their sick child to school.”

— Councilwoman Natalia Rudiak, Pittsburgh



### CityHealth helps cities thrive through policies that improve people’s day-to-day quality of life, well-being and health.

CityHealth, an initiative of the de Beaumont Foundation and Kaiser Permanente, works to advance a package of evidence-based policy solutions that will help millions of people live longer, better lives in vibrant, prosperous communities.

Our assessment of how the nation’s 40 largest cities fare in nine policies is based in research, backed by qualified experts

and shown to have bipartisan support. With these policies in place, cities will attract families who want the best for themselves and their children, young people looking for interesting places to work and businesses that need high-quality talent. The bottom line: Policies like earned sick leave will improve lives and help cities thrive.

### FOCUS ON POLICY: EARNED SICK LEAVE

Earned sick leave ordinances require employers within a set jurisdiction to allow people to take time off for illness or injury for themselves, their children or their parents. Working men and women can use this time to stay home or to see a doctor until they are healthy enough to work again, without concern for lost wages or job loss. These are just some of the benefits of a comprehensive earned sick leave policy:

- **Fights contagious diseases.** According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, one in three people who work in the private sector—and one in four of people who are earned the lowest-wages—do not have earned sick days to care for their own health. People without earned sick days are 1.5 times more likely than those with earned sick days to report going to work with contagious illnesses like the flu or a viral infection. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 70 percent of food-

borne transmission of norovirus is due to infected food workers.

- **Reduces workplace illness.** By allowing people to take time off when they are sick, we reduce the spread of infectious disease—an especially important issue for people who work in the food industry or care for children or the elderly. In fact, according to research published in the American Journal of Public Health, access to earned sick days reduces the spread of the flu in the work- place by nearly six percent.
- **Increases productivity.** Earned sick days help to decrease the productivity lost when employees work sick—known as “presenteeism”—which is estimated to cost our national economy \$160 billion annually. The US Department of Labor finds earned sick time promotes employment and income stability, which is a key component of economic growth.

## MEDALS BY CITY

Albuquerque	🚫
Atlanta	🚫
Austin	🥇
Baltimore	🥉
Boston	🥉
Charlotte	🚫
Chicago	🚫
Columbus	🚫
Dallas	🥇
Denver	🚫
Detroit	🥉
El Paso	🚫
Fort Worth	🚫
Fresno	🥉
Houston	🚫
Indianapolis	🚫
Jacksonville	🚫
Kansas City	🚫
Las Vegas	🚫
Long Beach	🥉
Los Angeles	🥇
Louisville	🚫
Memphis	🚫
Mesa	🥉
Milwaukee	🚫
Nashville	🚫
New York	🚫
Oklahoma City	🚫
Philadelphia	🚫
Phoenix	🥉
Portland	🥉
Sacramento	🥉
San Antonio	🥇
San Diego	🥇
San Francisco	🚫
San Jose	🥉
Seattle	🚫
Tucson	🥉
Virginia Beach	🚫
Washington, D.C.	🥉

## SUPPORT FROM THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Studies have shown that in cities and states that have implemented earned sick days, business owners are supportive of the policy and report that the costs are nonexistent or minimal.

A year and a half after implementation of Connecticut’s earned sick days law, three-quarters of surveyed employers

expressed support for the policy, and most reported a modest impact or no impact their costs and business operations.

According to a study by the city auditor of Seattle, 70 percent of business owners favored the city’s earned sick days law one year after it was implemented.

## HOW CITIES STACK UP

### The State of Earned Sick Leave Policies in Big U.S. Cities

Earned sick leave policies reduce the spread of contagious illnesses, increase employment and income stability, and save cities money in health care costs.

In 2019, 5 out of 40 cities received a gold medal for their earned sick leave policies. Six cities earned a silver medal and 12 earned bronze.



### The Gold Standard for Earned Sick Leave

CityHealth’s 40-city assessment combined innovative legal analysis with the input of national experts to determine the “gold standard” for each policy. For earned sick leave policies, we only awarded gold medals to cities with

the best quality policy. Cities that did not meet this standard received either silver, bronze, or no medal. This assessment includes information about city laws valid through August 1, 2019.

### How did we award earned sick leave policy medals?

	🥉 Bronze	🥈 Silver	🥇 Gold
City has an earned sick leave law	✓	✓	✓
Employee can use earned sick leave to care for family members	✗	✓	✓
Employee can use earned sick leave for domestic violence recovery	✗	✓	✓
Minimum amount of earned sick leave time employee can earn	✗	✓ = 40 HOURS	✓ = 48 HOURS
Smallest business size covered under earned sick leave law	✗	✗	✓ 1 EMPLOYEE