



To Hamilton City Council,

March 8, 2021

Happy International Women's Day! Regarding a matter of great concern to many women and their families: Recently council rightly voted to petition the Ford government to include universal paid sick days in its pandemic response. We commend you for this initiative, recognizing its importance to containing the COVID 19 pandemic by ensuring that workers need not choose between potentially spreading COVID and putting food on the table or paying rent. We were disappointed to see however, that the motion initially to lobby the federal and provincial governments for permanent paid sick days was watered down to cover only the pandemic.

Disappointed because the need to protect public health doesn't end after a pandemic. On the contrary, pandemics serve to highlight long standing deficiencies in our health system which should encourage policy-makers to close the gaps so that we can be healthier between them and more resilient during them. We know that the lack of paid sick days doesn't need a temporary fix, it needs a permanent solution.

Speaking as healthcare professionals, we know that paid sick days both in and out of a pandemic are a pressing matter of both public health and justice. First, even outside of a pandemic, communicable disease will spread when workers must go to work sick, impacting both health and the economy. Second, "the most recent data available reveals that 58% of workers in Canada — and over 70% of workers making less than \$25,000 — have no access to paid sick days."¹ We know that precarious and low paying work is disproportionately taken up by racialized and Indigenous people making the issue an even more pressing one of justice.

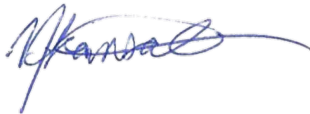
Much concern was raised over the fate of small businesses taking the brunt of this measure, were it to be made permanent. Firstly, it is a false dichotomy to position the wellbeing of workers against those of their small business employers. Were there real economic impacts on small business of affording workers paid sick days, surely there are imaginative ways to mitigate this, instead of placing the burden solely on those least positioned to take it. Secondly, evidence from other jurisdictions shows that paid sick leave is not a death knell for small business. While there is no Canadian evidence to rely on, data from the US, notably the large cities of San Francisco and New York show that the majority of small business owners

¹ Decent Work and Health Network. BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE: How to close the paid sick days gap during COVID-19 and beyond. Ontario. August 2020

supported mandated paid sick days, found that employees were not abusing the system and that the measures had little to no impact on their bottom line.^{2 3}

As healthcare professionals, we urge you to join in the important movement for more just employment policies for the betterment of all of our community and community members. This must include universal, fully paid, adequate, permanent, accessible sick days for all workers. We call on the Hamilton City Council to endorse and advocate for permanent paid sick days as legislated through employment standards (7 permanent paid sick days with an additional 14 during public health emergencies).

Sincerely,



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² 113 Drago R, Lovell V. San Fran PSL Ordinance. SanFrancisco's paid sick leave ordinance: Outcomes for employers and employees. http://www.working-families.org/network/pdf/SF_Report_PaidSickDays.pdf. Published February, 2011.

³ Applebaum E, Milkman R. No big deal: The impact on New York city's paid sick day laws on employers. <https://cepr.net/images/stories/reports/nyc-paid-sickdays-2016-09.pdf>. Page 18. Published September 6, 2016