

## Become a Co-sponsor of the Healthy Families Act

March 15, 2007

Dear Representative:

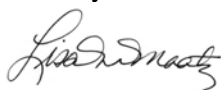
On behalf of over 100,000 bipartisan members and 1,300 branches of the American Association of University Women, we write to **urge you to become a co-sponsor the Healthy Families Act**, which will be introduced by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) on March 13, 2007. AAUW believes that offering workers the option of taking time off when they or a family member are sick is not just good for families, it's good for business.<sup>i</sup>

The Healthy Families Act would require all employers with at least 15 or more employees to provide seven days of paid sick leave annually for full-time employees and a prorated amount of paid leave for employees who work part-time. By ensuring that hard working Americans are guaranteed a minimum number of paid sick days that can also be used to care for sick dependents, working parents will no longer have to make the difficult choices between caring for loved ones – or themselves – and losing much-needed income and perhaps putting their jobs in jeopardy.

At least 145 countries worldwide provide paid sick days, with 127 providing a week or more annually.<sup>ii</sup> AAUW cannot help but note that many hardworking Americans do not have access to this same important benefit. In fact, just under half (43 percent) of the private sector workforce has no paid sick days.<sup>iii</sup> Low-wage workers are especially hard hit, with three in four workers without any paid sick days.<sup>iv</sup> Further, 47 percent of women working in the private sector have no paid sick days, and 27 percent of women working low-income jobs, or jobs below 200 percent of the poverty level, put off getting healthcare because they cannot take the time off work.<sup>v</sup> Half of working mothers report that they must miss work and often go without pay when caring for a sick child.<sup>vi</sup> Lastly, with more than a third of Americans already experiencing significant elder care responsibilities,<sup>vii</sup> coupled with the aging of the baby boomers, the problem is likely to worsen in the years ahead.

The need for such legislation is clear. AAUW urges you to support the Healthy Families Act by contacting Rep. DeLauro's office and becoming an original co-sponsor. If you have any questions, please contact me at 202-785-7720 or Tracy Sherman, Government Relations Manager, at 202-785-7730.

Sincerely,



Lisa M. Maatz  
Director of Public Policy and Government Relations

<sup>i</sup> Families and Work Institute. *Highlights of the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce*, p.29. 2004. <http://www.familiesandwork.org>, as cited in "Get Well Soon: Americans Can't Afford to Be Sick," p. 2. National Partnership for Women and Families. June 2004. <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/site/DocServer/GetWellSoonReport.pdf?docID=342> Accessed January 19, 2007.

<sup>ii</sup> The Institute for Health and Social Policy. *The Work, Family, and Equity Index: How Does the United States Measure Up?* <http://www.mcgill.ca/files/ihsp/WFEIFinal2007.pdf>. Accessed February 7, 2007.

<sup>iii</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Employee Benefits in Private Industry, 2006*. <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/sp/ebsm0004.pdf>. Accessed January 19, 2007.

<sup>iv</sup> Heymann, Jody. *The Widening Gap: Why America's Working Families are in Jeopardy and What Can Be Done About It*, p. 45. Basic Books, 2000.

<sup>v</sup> Lovell, Vicky. *Women and Paid Sick Days: Crucial for Family Well-Being*. Fact Sheet. February 2007.

<sup>vi</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation. "Women, Work and Family Health: A Balancing Act." Issue Brief, April 2003. <http://www.kff.org/womenshealth/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&PageID=14293> Accessed January 19, 2007.

<sup>vii</sup> Families and Work Institute. *Highlights of the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce*, p. 29. 2004.