

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H.F. 7 – EARNED SICK AND SAFE TIME

Raye Perez, St. Cloud, MN

My name is Raye Perez (they/them) and I'm a Social Studies Education student at St Cloud State University. I'm the oldest of 5 children, part of the LGBTQ community and half Mexican. My mother is a medical receptionist and retail manager. My father is a military vet and is going back to school while also working as a maintenance person at the local hospital. I'm here today to tell you my story about why Earned Sick Time is necessary for my life.

My younger brother has asthma and when he was little would often have to stay home when it was too cold or when his allergies were acting up. Being 11 years older than him I often had to stay home with him because neither of my parents had sick time.

The first time I remember staying home from school to take care of him was when I was 12 years old.

I remember missing a lot of time during middle school and during my junior and senior year. While taking college-level courses at the same time I was getting berated by my teachers for missing school. Because of this, I carry a lot of animosity towards the system of employment and poverty my parents were trapped in.

I realized that I can't be mad at my parents for missing part of my education because they were just trying their best. They should not have had to make the choice to pull kids out of school because they couldn't miss a paycheck. My parents did the best they could but were left with a hard choice like many parents because we do not have systems in place to support parents and children.

I now work two jobs, one in childcare and one in retail. I don't have sick time in either and I have had to make really difficult choices on if I can miss a day of pay to take time to care for myself when sick. If you think working with little kids is hard, try doing it when you lost your voice and are fatigued. In both of my jobs, I work with people and I'm worried one day I could get someone else sick because I couldn't lose pay by calling in. Not having paid sick time has put me in tough situations since I was a child and it still is to this day.

I'm going to school right now, to become a teacher and be the first person on my dad's side of the family to earn a bachelors degree. While I want to be a teacher, I don't believe I should "find a better job" to earn the ability to take care of myself and loved ones when I'm sick. I'm a human now and I'll be a human then, I deserve to be able to take care of myself.

Please support Earned Sick Time to make support workers, children, parents, students and all Minnesotans who have to decide between staying home to take care of themselves or paying a bill.

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