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Democratic Appropriations Chairman

Senate of Pennsylvania

STANDING COMMITTEES

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APPOINTMENTS

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PA HIGHER EDUCATION FOUNDATION
PA LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS
PA MINORITY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
STATE EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEMS BOARD

January 27, 2017

The Honorable Tom Wolf, Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Room 225, Main Capitol Bldg.
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Jake Corman
Majority Floor Leader
Senate of Pennsylvania
Room 350, Main Capitol Bldg.
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Jay Costa
Minority Floor Leader
Senate of Pennsylvania
Room 535, Main Capitol Bldg.
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Dave Reed
Majority Floor Leader
PA House of Representatives
110 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Frank Dermody
Minority Floor Leader
PA House of Representatives
423 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf and Leaders Corman, Costa, Reed, and Dermody:

I am writing to urge you to immediately convene a working group of interested stakeholders to negotiate and craft a statewide employer paid sick leave policy for the commonwealth.

As you may be aware, earlier this week the Senate Local Government Committee reported SB 128, a bill that preempts local municipalities from enacting paid sick leave ordinances. If enacted into law, SB 128 would invalidate previously enacted local ordinances that require employers in certain municipalities to provide paid sick leave to their employees and prohibit local government officials from enacting such ordinances in the future.

Under SB 128, in the city of Philadelphia approximately 200,000 who are receiving paid sick leave based on an ordinance adopted by the Philadelphia City Council in 2015 will see the benefit disappear. This bill would also invalidate an ordinance (currently being litigated) in the city of Pittsburgh potentially impacting thousands of hard-working people.

Supporters of SB 128 claim the bill is needed to ensure that the commonwealth's roughly 2,500 municipalities do not adopt a hodge-podge of paid leave ordinances that lack uniformity. While I understand those concerns, without a comprehensive statewide policy, local government represents the only avenue for elected officials and advocates for paid sick leave to pursue. We should not take that power away from locally elected officials unless we replace it with a statewide solution.

I believe the time has come for Pennsylvania to address the paid sick leave issue head on. Our workers need and deserve to be able to address their health needs and those of their family without sacrificing their job security or their economic security. From a business perspective, aside from encouraging a healthy workforce, paid sick leave is an attractive benefit for job seekers, increases morale and productivity among employees, and reduces employee turnover.

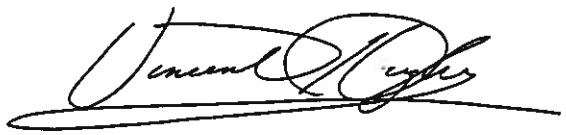
Consider the following:

- The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that 4 in 10 private sector employees (40 million) do not have access to paid sick leave.
- Seven in 10 low wage earners (those in the bottom 25th percentile) have no access to paid sick leave.
- Fifty-five percent of workers without paid sick leave reported going into work while ill.
- Most workers without paid sick leave are forced to go to work sick because a missed paycheck has dire consequences to their household budget.
- Harvard Business Review estimates that sick employees reporting to work annually cost U.S. employers $150 - $250 million in lost productivity.

Despite the positive benefits of paid sick leave, supporters of SB 128 and those who fear non-uniform local ordinances have been reluctant to engage in a conversation about a uniform, statewide policy for Pennsylvania employers and employees. I am seeking your assistance to begin the conversation with all interested stakeholders so we can balance the interests of employers with the needs of our workforce and make Pennsylvania a national leader on paid sick leave.

Thank you for your consideration of my request. I look forward to your response and to working with all of you on this very important issue.

Sincerely,



Senator Vincent J. Hughes