

## **Protecting the health of all**

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Certainly we have already achieved a lot this year with the approval of the federal measure that will provide health insurance to more than 30 million Americans, but there are still hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers, have health insurance but cannot make use of it.

We all know that when you get sick, the first thing you should do is stay at home not only to recover but also to limit the possibility of infecting others.

Last year when the H1N1 virus spread to millions of Americans, local government representatives, state and federal told us that anyone who felt ill should stay home to avoid the epidemic continues to gain strength. But for nearly half of New Yorkers who work, stay home sick can cost affect work or income.

A study by Community Service Society and A Better Balance is estimated that 48% of New Yorkers - more than 1.65 million people - do not get paid if they are absent from their jobs for medical reasons. And low-income New Yorkers are the most affected. Two thirds of them cannot take the day off when they are sick without losing pay for that day. In the Latino community, the proportion of workers affected by the lack of benefit is 72%, or 7 out of 10 employees Latinos do not have the benefit of sick pay.

Similarly, a study by the Congressional Joint Economic Committee estimated that the Latino community nationwide 49% of all Latino workers in companies with more than 15 employees not receiving payment for sick days.

The cost for small businesses to pay sick days to employees is minimal, while the benefit we provide to workers, their families and the general public, would be of great value.

The extent of payment for medical leave was resubmitted to the city council of the City of New York in March 2010. The measure will allow all workers in New York to earn paid sick days depending on the amount of time they have in their employment. Companies with more than 20 employees pay a maximum of nine days sick leave, while businesses with fewer than 20 employees will pay five.

The national polls suggest that a large majority of Americans support universal implementation of payment for sick days. In New York City, 79% of Democrats supported the idea and 60% of Republicans as well. In addition, 88% of mothers who work supports the idea of payment for sick days as a basic standard for the workplace.

It is time that the government responds to the needs of workers and also protects public health.