

GALE A. BREWER
COUNCIL MEMBER, DISTRICT 6
MANHATTAN

DISTRICT OFFICE
353 COLUMBUS AVENUE, 11TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10024
212-875-0282
Fax: 212-875-0279

CITY HALL OFFICE
250 BROADWAY, SUITE 1744
NEW YORK, NY 10007
212-786-6975
Fax: 212-512-7717

gale.brewer@citycouncil.nyc.gov
www.council.nyc.gov



THE COUNCIL
OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

CHAIR
GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

COMMITTEES
AGING
FINANCE
GENERAL WELFARE
HIGHER EDUCATION
HOUSING & BUILDINGS
MENTAL HEALTH
TECHNOLOGY
TRANSPORTATION
WATERFRONTS

The church is “the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and critic of the state...”

*Words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Strength to Love, 1963*

Our Clergy friends,

As New Yorkers gather in houses of worship this Martin Luther King, Jr. Day to keep alive his inspiring vision, we know that many of you will echo his words when speaking out for economic and social justice. We ask that this year, in your message from the pulpit, you join us in calling for giving workers a fair wage, as Dr. King did in his last public act. *A fair wage includes the ability to take a paid sick day to care for your own and your family’s health needs.*

Justice does not exist when well-paid workers routinely earn paid sick time while those struggling to support their families on low-wage jobs lose their pay and risk being fired if they fall ill or need to stay home to care for a sick child. Government statistics show that in the New York metropolitan area, 84% of workers in the top wage quartile get paid sick time while only 37% of those in the bottom quartile do (BLS data, March 2008). Over half of NYC public school parents do not have a single paid sick day according to a recent survey (CSS, Lake Research 2009). The results are obvious: sick kids can’t learn and wind up making their classmates and teachers sick.

Working parents should not be forced to choose between a feverish, coughing child and being able to pay the bills. Yet today in New York we have a restaurant worker told, “the only way you can take off sick is if you show up in a casket.” And we have a bank employee fired because she took one day off to be with her toddler who was rushed to the hospital with breathing problems. These are real stories of real New Yorkers.

We can end this injustice.

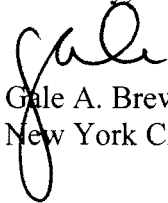
Last year we came very close to passing The Paid Sick Time Act. In 2011 we will strengthen our efforts. The Paid Sick Time Act before the New York City Council would establish a modest minimum floor of paid sick time that all workers would be entitled to earn on their jobs. The cost to employers would be minimal – about the same as a small increase in the minimum wage. This law would create a level playing field for all businesses so that those doing the right thing for their employees would not be undercut by businesses willing to exploit workers and put the health of other employees and customers at risk. Other cities, like San Francisco and Washington, DC have already adopted paid sick days laws that are working well. Businesses – even some who were initially against the laws – say it has not turned out to be a problem for them. And statistical studies by researchers at the Drum Major Institute confirm that San Francisco has actually fared better than surrounding counties without paid sick days laws, even in the economic downturn.

Who would be against such a common sense measure in New York City? The opposition was led by powerful business interests using the same kinds of false “job killer” scare tactics that were used against every progressive piece of legislation from social security to the minimum wage to anti-pollution measures. It is fundamentally unjust that those who already take paid sick time for granted can deprive this basic labor standard to those struggling to climb the economic ladder.

We ask you, as the conscience of our city, to rise up this day and let our City Council and the Mayor know that we will not rest until all working New Yorkers have the right to earn paid sick time.

Please let us know if you plan to include a call for paid sick time in your Martin Luther King, Jr. Day remarks so we can tally our strength. We would be happy to provide more information about the issue or meet with you or your social action group. Please contact Jared Make by email at jmake@abetterbalance.org or by phone at 212 430-5982.

Sincerely,



Gale A. Brewer
New York City Council

A Better Balance: The Work and Family Legal Center
Center for Childrens' Initiatives
Community Service Society
Drum Major Institute
Jews for Racial and Economic Justice
Make the Road New York
New York State Paid Leave Coalition
Public Health Association of NYC
Restaurant Opportunities Center-NY
Women of Color Policy Network, NYU Wagner Graduate School of Public Service