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The Health Benefits of Fair Scheduling Policies

Workers across the income spectrum are struggling to care for their families while holding jobs that demand around-the-clock availability. Legislation is urgently needed at the federal, state, and municipal levels to give workers greater control over their schedules and protect them from abusive scheduling practices. The benefits of fair scheduling laws are significant, allowing workers to arrange for childcare, budget effectively, and advance their education. These laws also improve health outcomes for workers and their families.

Harvard Kennedy School's Shift Project studied the effect of Seattle's fair scheduling law and found that it **increased worker happiness and sleep quality, reduced material hardship, and allowed workers to schedule and pay for medical care.**ⁱ

The National Women's Law Center found that unfair work schedules **make it difficult for women to access healthcare for themselves and their loved ones**, noting that medical appointments often need to be made well in advance, an impossibility when workers do not know their schedules until days before their shifts.ⁱⁱ

Stories from workers dealing with unfair schedules corroborate that data:

"I received my work schedule on Saturday afternoon, just one day in advance, for the workweek beginning on Sunday. When I told the company that I would not be available because I had to take my kids to medical appointments, the store ignored my requests and called me in during my appointment times."

"Almost every week, I am called to work at the last minute because the store is short-staffed. Sometimes I want to say no, but I can't afford to – even when I feel sick or I need to help my disabled mom."

"I want to work more hours, but it is hard for me to pick up last-minute shifts. I have a disability, and two of my children are also disabled, so we have a lot of medical appointments. My kids wouldn't be safe if I left them alone, so if I want to pick up a last-minute shift I have to ask a relative to watch my kids. Asking my family to provide childcare has made our relationships more complicated, and the emotional stress of coordinating care for my kids has exacerbated my chronic illness."ⁱⁱⁱ

Everyone deserves access to schedules that work for them, which benefit workers, their health, and their families.

ⁱ Kristen Harknett et al., *Seattle's Secure Scheduling Ordinance: Year 2 Worker Impact Report 9*, The Shift Project, <https://shift.hks.harvard.edu/seattles-secure-scheduling-ordinance-year-2-worker-impact-report/>.

ⁱⁱ *Collateral Damage: Scheduling Challenges for Workers in Low-Wage Jobs and Their Consequences*, Nat'l Women's Law Center (Apr. 2017), <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Collateral-Damage.pdf>.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Schedules that Work Act: Part-Time Workers' Bill of Rights = A Fair Workweek for Hourly Workers*, Center for Popular Democracy (Oct. 2019), <https://www.populardemocracy.org/news/publications/schedules-work-act-part-time-workers-bill-rights-fair-workweek-hourly-workers>.