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**Letter to the Tennessee Senate Standing Committee on State & Local Government  
in Support of SB 1762**

**February 21, 2022**

**Submitted by: Feroza Freeland, Policy Manager of the Southern Office**

Dear Senator,

We urge you to **vote YES on SB 1762**, which restores local government authority to set standards on paid leave for government contractors and businesses in their communities.

Paid leave can be an important tool to promote economic security, protect public health, and ultimately keep people working. However, current state law prevents local leaders from setting standards on paid leave, even for contractors that are doing business with the city or county government. SB 1762 simply restores the authority to make these decisions locally.

Imagine that a local school district contracts with an outside company to provide food services and transportation. When selecting the best vendor to serve our children's lunch and drive their buses, a district may want to consider whether that company provides paid sick leave to its employees. By ensuring that workers can take time off when they are sick without missing a paycheck, paid leave helps reduce the spread of illness. Especially during flu season or a COVID-19 surge, most local leaders do not want sick employees serving meals in the school cafeteria or dropping children off at school.

In addition, paid leave benefits businesses and the economy by improving retention, reducing turnover costs, and increasing productivity. Without paid leave, many in our state simply cannot afford to stay home when they or a loved one are sick, which negatively impacts those individuals, their families, their co-workers, & the larger community.



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Each community in Tennessee is unique and faces its own challenges. What works in Jackson may not be the best solution for Chattanooga or Knoxville. Taxpayers should have a say in how their tax dollars are spent through local government contracts, including the types and quality of jobs and services provided through those contracts. Local leaders need the autonomy to consult with their constituents and make decisions that are best for their individual communities, without undue interference from the state.

Historically, our state has often supported local control. For example, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Lee stated during a press conference that “local governments know better than we do what is needed in their local communities.”<sup>1</sup> Enacting SB 1762 is a simple way to return authority to local leaders to make their own decisions on an issue that is vitally important to working families.

Thank you for your consideration.

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A Better Balance is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting working women, caregivers, and families. Our regional Southern Office is based in Nashville and serves families across Tennessee and throughout the South. One of our core priorities is ensuring that local leaders have the freedom to use every available tool to support working families in their community.

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<sup>1</sup> Governor Bill Lee COVID-19 Daily Briefing, March 17, 2020, at 13:29, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWhSefisUwE>.