

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

February 15, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Hoyer,

As the Omicron variant rapidly spreads, we ask that you include the now expired COVID-19 sick leave mandate first instituted by the broadly bipartisan Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) in a future legislative package.

As you know, the COVID-19 Omicron variant has erupted across the entire United States—reaching over a million new cases daily, including many Americans who are already vaccinated and experiencing breakthrough cases.¹² Even though evidence shows that vaccinated cases are less severe, breakthrough cases are still contagious, and require recovery and isolation. In order to protect our workforce and families and slow the pandemic, we must extend paid sick leave protections.

As the pandemic continues, many frontline workers are rapidly losing their limited sick leave. According to a recent survey conducted by the Harvard Shift Project, 65% of workers show up to work ill but not because they don't care about the pandemic.³ Instead, it is because 55% of workers at large service-sector firms, which comprise about 20% of the American workforce, have no access to sick leave.⁴ Inadequate sick day allocations hurt our most vulnerable. Unfortunately, a disproportionate number of lowest wage earners also have the lowest allotted sick days. When forced to choose between supporting themselves and staying healthy, many see no option except to continue working while spreading the virus further.

At the onset of the pandemic, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which passed with bipartisan support on March 14th, 2020, entitled employees to ten days of paid sick days for self-quarantine, diagnosis or preventative care, COVID-19 treatment, or time to care for a family member who was affected by COVID-19. As you know, the temporary requirement for employers to provide paid leave, including sick and family leave, expired on December 31, 2020. Even employees who have negotiated sick leave are seeing their leave eroded quickly by the

¹ Reuters “U.S. Reports 1.35 Million COVID-19 Cases in a Day, Shattering Global Record.” January 11, 2022.

² ABC News. “Breakthrough COVID-19 Infections and Deaths Rose During Delta, But Far Outpaced by the Unvaccinated.” December 21, 2021.

³ CBS News. “Omicron Highlights Lack of Sick Days for Many U.S. Workers.” January 10, 2022.

⁴ Harvard Shift Project “Essential and vulnerable: Service-Sector Workers and Paid Sick Leave.” April 2020.

Omicron variant and inflexible employers. American workers, unionized and otherwise, are watching their benefits vanish by no fault of their own. This cannot continue.

The FFCRA mandate included paid sick leave, which guaranteed employees extra time to stay at home and take care of themselves and their families. If Congress fails to act, the Omicron variant will continue to threaten the health of our communities. For this reason, we ask that House and Senate leadership to act immediately to extend the COVID-19 sick leave mandate until the end of the public health emergency.

We thank you for your commitment to leading the country through a once-in-a-century pandemic and your solidarity with the American workforce. Together, we can renew our commitment to work together to build more resilient, safer, and more prosperous communities.

Sincerely,



Bill Foster
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress



Sean Casten
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



Jason Crow
Member of Congress



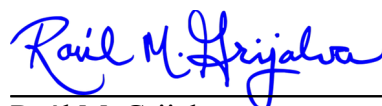
Danny K. Davis
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Adriano Espaillat
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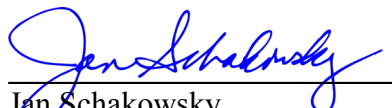
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