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**STRONG HEARING IN OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SUPPORTING STATEWIDE SICK DAYS BILL**

Salem, Oregon (April 3, 2013) – All 50 seats were taken this morning in Hearing Room E in the state capitol building, and about 25 more people watched from an overflow room when HB 3390 – a statewide paid sick days bill -- was heard before the House Committee on Business and Labor.

In addition to an overflow crowd, supportive testimony was given by a broad range of Oregonians – 23 in all, including Portland City Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who lead the effort to unanimously pass its earned sick time ordinance, small business owners, union members, food service workers, public health providers and advocates, domestic violence service providers, state legislators, and community advocates. A strong case was made that a solution is needed to address what is clearly a public health problem, an economic security problem, and a human rights problem all across Oregon.

State legislators are moving forward in the 2013 legislative session with two bills that propose a statewide earned sick time policy: HB 3390 and SB 801 (sponsored by Rep. Dembrow, Rep. Keny-Guyer, Sen. Rosenbaum and Sen. Steiner-Hayward).

A problem that exists across the state

The same compelling reasons to solve this problem in Portland also exist beyond its borders. Current data¹ show that almost half (48%) of Oregon's private-sector workforce does not earn sick time while they work – which translates to approximately 340,000 people who work outside of Portland². Of these workers, different groups are estimated to have different access:

- **Low-wage v. high-wage workers.** Earned sick time coverage is greatest among workers with the highest annual personal earnings: only 19% of employees with annual earnings of \$65,000 or more lack earned sick days. By contrast, workers with annual personal earnings at or below \$19,999 are much less likely to earn sick time: almost eight out of ten (79%) workers in this earnings group don't earn sick time.

¹ Institute for Women's Policy & Research, April 2013.

² If you include people working in Portland (who will be covered by the city's policy as of 1/14), it's 597,000.

- **Food service workers.** Fewer than one in five workers in food preparation and serving related occupations have access to earned sick days (82% lack access).
- **Hispanic workers.** Approximately 66% of Hispanic workers in Oregon lack earned sick days.
- **Service and care workers.** The vast majority (77%) of workers in personal care and service occupations, such as child care workers and manicurists, don't earn sick time.

From Portland to Salem

The Portland City Council voted unanimously last month to enable all workers in Portland to earn sick time while they work (up to five days/year, one hour accrued for every 30 worked), effective January, 2014. The policy is a community-wide solution to a community-wide problem: with no sick time requirement, too many working people cannot stay home from work to recover or see a doctor when sick or to care for a sick family member. Read the final ordinance here: <http://bit.ly/PortlandSickTimeOrdinance>.

Portland City Commissioners, among many others, are asking the state legislature to pass a statewide sick time policy as soon as possible. Three state legislators – Representatives Michael Dembrow, Alissa Keny-Guyer, and Jessica Vega-Pederson -- testified before the Portland City Council in support of its policy on January 31, 2013. Senator Diane Rosenbaum was unable to attend the hearing but had co-signed a letter with several state legislators read by Rep. Dembrow that urged the council to pass the “strongest possible policy now.” From the letter:

“The time has come to require employers to allow their employees to earn paid sick time while they work. Such a policy will go a long way toward enabling our families to be reliable providers, responsible caregivers, and good employees.”

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Andrea Paluso, Executive Director of Family Forward Oregon and Director of the Everybody Benefits Coalition for Earned Sick Days, is optimistic that state legislators will support this long overdue policy because it's a win-win solution to a known problem that affects hundreds of thousands of Oregonians, and because it is a very popular issue for legislators among their constituents (polling shows this to be a very popular issue across the country³):

“For too many Oregon families, taking a child to the doctor or staying home with the flu means losing needed pay – or even a job. Earning sick days can ensure that workers don't have to risk their financial security to do what's right for their own health and the wellbeing of our workplaces, schools, and communities.

³ National Partnership for Women & Families, December 2012.

It is exciting to be part of a growing movement – here in Oregon and across the country - to create this kind of workplace standard that values workers' health and economic security and employer productivity. Approximately 145 countries require paid sick time; in the absence of federal legislation, it's time Oregon solves this problem itself. The people who aren't allowed to earn sick time have waited long enough."

Hearing Testimony in Support of HB 3390

These statements from several of the bill's supporters (some testimony delivered in person, some in writing) convey well the tenor and breadth of the testimony in favor of a statewide sick time policy:

Jim Houser, Co-Chair of the Main Street Alliance of Oregon and Owner of Hawthorne Auto Clinic in Portland, offers allows his employees to earn sick time and sees it as a plus for small business,

"As small businesses, retaining well-trained and valued employees, and thereby reducing turnover and associated costs, is one of our top concerns. To put it more simply, we believe that if we take care of our employees, they will take care of us, and our businesses will thrive. Earned sick days is really just a basic employment standard, like worker's compensation or child labor rules. That's why we support HB 3390, and increased access to earned sick leave in the state of Oregon. It's the right thing to do."

Avery Leinova earns paid sick time where she works, but can only access it on the third day she is sick – the first two are unpaid. She shared her experiences on the job:

"As you know, this is a terrible year for colds and flu. When I caught the chest cold that was going around, I had to work. It's difficult to answer phones when I can barely talk, with coughing fits that last up to five minutes. Not to mention all the germs I was spreading. Had I had sick time from the first day of my illness, I could have stayed home and gotten over the worst of it before returning to work.

And it's not just me. Where I work, lots of people come to work sick because they can't afford to stay home. There are single parents and families for whom missing a day's wages means going without food. This isn't right. Everyone needs to be able to take paid sick leave when they're sick – on the first day they're sick."

Helen Bellanca, a family physician, sees first-hand what it looks like when her patients don't earn sick time strongly supports HB 3390:

"I saw many patients who had to choose between staying home with a sick child (or staying home because of their own illness) and keeping their job. There were several families who described needing to leave their children in unsafe situations

(like with neighbors they were not sure they could trust) because the children were ill and could not go to daycare, but the parent could not take time off work.

This proposal to offer paid sick leave is a strong step in the right direction. It says that we value the health and well-being of all our families. It says that we, as a state, want to ensure that all our residents are empowered to take care of themselves and their children without being financially burdened for it. It says that when we make decisions, we do our best to align those decisions with good public health practices.”

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