April 8, 2020

Dear Governor Northam:

I want to thank you and your administration for your continued response to this unprecedented pandemic. Recent developments have made it possible to secure greater provisions for first-line responders, essential personnel, and homeless populations. However, I strongly believe that we can strengthen our efforts for working families in Virginia. Thus, I write to urge you to offer a Governor’s amendment to the budget during the Veto Session on April 22nd, 2020 to ensure 14 paid sick days for full time employees (and the pro-rated equivalent for hourly employees) in both the public and private sector.

Previously, I wrote to ask for a special, remote session to pass bills similar to SB 481 and HB 898, sponsored by Senator Favola and Delegate Guzman, respectively, which failed to pass during the regular 2020 session. With Speaker Filler-Corn’s recent decision to hold the Veto Session outdoors, I believe that this provides us an opportunity to pass paid sick days. And, while I acknowledge that an amendment to the budget to pass paid sick day legislation is unconventional, it is important to explore creative, innovative mechanisms to protect Virginians in this unprecedented time. We must consider every opportunity to meet the needs of Virginians.

It’s vital that we reflect on the potential impact on the health and well-being of vulnerable populations, such as low-income communities. Residents of Virginia are making every effort to protect themselves against the virus. However, current financial barriers prevent many individuals from taking time off; thereby, placing them, and people with whom they come in contact, at heightened risk of exposure. These circumstances not only disproportionately impact low-wage workers in the food service and healthcare industries, but also everyone who comes in contact with them. A lack of paid sick days means many Virginians are left with impossible choices. According to the Virginia Interfaith Center, more than one million Virginians have zero paid sick days.

Paid sick leave would eliminate the need for individuals to choose between their health and their financial stability. We have a responsibility as elected officials to protect and support every single Virginian, no matter their background or income level. I hope that you will strongly consider this request.

Sincerely,

Delegate Jennifer Carroll Foy
Member, Virginia House of Delegates
2nd District