

December 12, 2017

Mayor Steve Adler  
Austin City Council Members  
Austin City Hall  
301 West 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Austin, Texas 78701

Re: Paid sick leave

Dear Mayor Adler and City Council Members,

You asked me to provide my opinion of the value of paid sick leave. I am happy to do so. The information below comes from my personal experience in my previous position as President and CEO of the Regenstrief Institute, Inc., a nonprofit company affiliated with the Indiana University School of Medicine. It is also based on a review of the world's medical literature that I recently performed. I offer it in my capacity as a physician, researcher and former executive, not as chair of the Department of Population Health at the Dell Medical School. As discussed, it would not be appropriate for me to offer an opinion about whether the City of Austin should require paid sick leave — this letter is limited to questions of what the science says about its impact and my personal experiences before coming to the Dell Medical School.

The literature I reviewed showed that employees of companies that provided paid sick leave:

- Were 28% less likely to be injured on the job,<sup>1</sup>
- Had 22% fewer episodes of food-borne illnesses,<sup>2</sup>
- Were less likely to report greater psychological distress and were 31% less likely to report that their distress interfered with their life and activities,<sup>3</sup>
- Were 14% less likely to visit a hospital emergency department and 32% less likely to visit the ED multiple times,<sup>4</sup>
- Were 16% more likely to visit outpatient health care venues,<sup>5</sup>
- Were 25% less likely to quit their jobs,<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Am J Public Health 2012;102:e59–e64

<sup>2</sup> Am J Prev Med 2017 Nov;53(5):609-615

<sup>3</sup> Am J Orthopsychiatry 2017 Sep 14 (in press)

<sup>4</sup> Am J Emerg Med 2016 May;34(5):784-9

<sup>5</sup> Am J Ind Med. 2011 October ; 54(10): 771–779

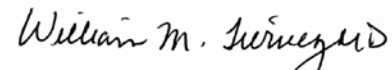
<sup>6</sup> Work Occup 2013 May 1; 40(2):143-73

- Were 10% less likely to die,<sup>7</sup> and
- Saved their employers between \$630 million and \$1.88 billion in 2017 in work hours lost to influenza.<sup>8</sup>

As an employer, my company provided paid sick leave that employees were strongly encouraged to use if they were feeling ill because we wanted to avoid “presenteeism,” which is when people show up to work, exposing their colleagues to contagious diseases, when they should be staying home. We also allowed (encouraged) employees to use their paid sick leave to care for sick children, realizing that employees with sick children are not likely to be as effective in performing their duties. We were confident that paying for sick leave for our approximately 200 employees more than paid for itself in lost work days, worker productivity, and suffering.

I hope you find this information useful. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important discussion.

Sincerely yours,

  
William M. Tierney, MD

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<sup>7</sup> Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2017 Oct 19;14(10). pii: E1247

<sup>8</sup> J Occup Environ Med. 2017 Sep;59(9):822-829