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WORKING FAMILIES NEED PAID SICK DAYS AND PAID FAMILY LEAVE

WHEREAS: Every day, working women and men in the United States struggle to meet the dual demands of work and family because their workplaces lack basic family friendly policies; and

WHEREAS: It is long past time for workplaces to reflect the needs of 21st century working families, which for many include the ability to care for children, family members and older relatives while also being productive, responsible employees; and

WHEREAS: Nearly one third of private-sector workers — and 69% of the lowest-wage workers — do not have paid sick days to care for their own health. That is more than thirty-four million workers with no access to paid sick days. Women are especially likely to hold low-wage jobs that do not provide benefits like paid sick days and paid leave; and

WHEREAS: The absence of paid sick time has forced Americans to make untenable choices between needed income and jobs on the one hand and caring for their own and their family's health on the other; and

WHEREAS: Workers face job loss and workplace discipline for taking sick time. Nearly one quarter of workers (23%) say they have lost a job or were told they would lose a job for taking time off to deal with a personal or family illness, including nearly one-sixth (16%) who say they have actually lost a job. Nearly one-sixth (16%) also say they or a family member were fired, suspended, written up or otherwise penalized or were told they would face such penalties for illness-related absences; and

WHEREAS: A lack of paid sick time jeopardizes workers' financial stability. For a typical family without paid sick days, on average, 3.3 days of pay lost due to illness are equivalent to the family's entire monthly health care budget, and 2.7 days are equivalent to their entire monthly grocery budget. Workers without paid sick days are more likely than others to be in poverty, to have high medical costs, and to have difficulty affording needed health care services; and

WHEREAS: Providing paid sick time improves public health by reducing

infectious disease. Adults without paid sick days are 1.5 times more likely than adults with paid sick days to report going to work with a contagious illness like the flu or a viral infection — and risk infecting others. Only one in three low-wage workers has paid sick days, and these workers are likely to work jobs requiring frequent contact with the public. A poll of women in the fast-food industry found that 70 percent reported going to work in the previous year while showing symptoms of illness such as coughing, sneezing, vomiting or with fever or diarrhea; and

WHEREAS: Working women are more likely to have significant caregiving responsibilities, including caring for elderly parents, children, or ill spouses/partners, and at the same time families increasingly rely on women’s earnings for economic stability. Half of U.S. families with children under 18 have a breadwinner mother, and Black, Native American and Latina mothers are especially likely to provide 40 percent or more of family income. Women make the vast majority of health care decisions in their families; and

WHEREAS: Paid sick days would help working family caregivers to manage both their caregiving responsibilities and the jobs they need to support their families, but only half (52 percent) of employed caregivers say their employer offers paid sick days; and

WHEREAS: Currently, no federal law guarantees paid sick days, but ten states, the District of Columbia, and 33 other jurisdictions have or will soon have paid sick days laws in place; and

WHEREAS: Only 15 percent of workers in the U.S. have access to paid family leave through their employers, and fewer than 40 percent have access to personal medical leave through employer-provided short-term disability insurance; and

WHEREAS: Just 60 percent of the workforce has access to job-protected unpaid leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), and just 38 percent are both eligible for FMLA and can afford to take unpaid leave. This means millions of workers face impossible choices between their health or the health of their families and a paycheck; and

WHEREAS: Tens of millions of families are living paycheck to paycheck—increasing the financial impact of personal illness, family caregiving, and the arrival of new children. Forty percent of adults could not afford an unexpected

\$400 expense without going into debt or needing to sell something. Working families lose approximately \$20.6 billion in wages each year due to a lack of access to paid family and medical leave. On average, workers 50 or older who leave the workforce to care for a parent lose more than \$300,000 in wages and retirement income, and the average for women is even higher. Paid leave would help close this gap to help keep working families stable and secure; and

WHEREAS: Changing demographics and an aging workforce mean that workers will face increased need for personal medical leave to address their own serious health conditions or disabilities, and for family caregiving leave to provide care for older family members and family members with disabilities. More than 43 million American adults – the majority of them women – are unpaid caregivers for adult family members or children, and sixty percent of caregivers also have a paid job. In the United States, there are approximately 26 million working-age adults with disabilities and approximately 36 million working-age adults with family members with disabilities. Paid leave would help more people enter and remain in the workforce while supporting their ability to care for themselves and their loved ones; and

WHEREAS: States are leading the way with models for successful paid family and medical leave policies. California, New Jersey, Rhode Island and New York have successfully implemented statewide paid family leave programs to complement their Temporary Disability Insurance (personal medical leave) programs, and Washington state, Massachusetts and the District of Columbia have passed strong, comprehensive paid family and medical leave laws that will go into effect soon; and

WHEREAS: Out of 193 countries in the United Nations, only a small handful do not have a national paid parental leave law: New Guinea, Suriname, a few South Pacific island nations and the United States.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: The Ohio AFL-CIO supports the Healthy Families Act (HFA) which would create a national paid sick days standard. HFA would allow workers in businesses with 15 or more employees to earn up to seven job-protected paid sick days each year, and for workers in smaller businesses to earn unpaid, job protected time, to be used to recover from illness, access preventive care, provide care for a sick family member, seek assistance for domestic violence, stalking or sexual assault or attend school meetings related to a child's health or disability.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: The Ohio AFL-CIO supports the Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act, which would create a national paid family and medical leave insurance fund that is modeled on successful state programs. It would provide workers with up to two-thirds of their typical wages when they need to take up to 12 weeks of leave away from their jobs to care for new children or seriously ill or injured family members including aging loved ones, to address their own serious health condition, or to address military care needs – and it does so without making unacceptable, harmful cuts to other essential programs that support women and families.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: The Ohio AFL-CIO will support legislative efforts in OHIO to expand access to paid family and medical leave such as Ohio H.B. 550 and S.B. 261.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED: That the Ohio AFL-CIO will support efforts to pass paid sick days and paid family and medical leave and in federal efforts to secure family friendly workplaces for all workers.

Submitted by: Coalition of Labor Union Women and United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1059