



Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Public Health Message Delivered to the Portland Chamber of Commerce

***“It’s time to wash your hands of your old position and endorse paid sick days.”***

(Portland) Members of the Maine Work and Family Coalition delivered a message – and several bottles of hand sanitizer – to the Chamber of Commerce today. Their message was simple: In light of the national H1N1 emergency, it’s time to support paid sick days for all. Citing a new national Health Impact Assessment on the positive public health impact of paid sick leave, advocates called for legislation requiring paid sick days for the more than 245,000 Maine workers without any.

“This report demonstrates that passing paid sick days legislation will save lives and dollars for the State of Maine. It could keep more people healthy, decrease unnecessary emergency room visits, make for fewer hospitalizations, keep our nursing homes healthier, and make eating at a restaurant safer. It makes sense - when we can all follow the CDC’s advice and stay home when we are sick, the state is a healthier and more productive place,” said Laura Harper, Director of Public Policy at the Maine Women’s Lobby.

Mike Hiltz, a Portland-area nurse, said, “I am constantly telling the people I care for the same things we’re all hearing from the Maine CDC – follow three simple steps: cover your mouth with your sleeve when you cough, wash your hands frequently, and stay home when you are sick. All my patients can follow the first two directions, but nearly half cannot follow the last piece of advice.”

Kristine Jenkins, a Portland-area mom, had this to say about the lack of paid sick days, “I know that I’m doing everything I can to protect myself and my family from the H1N1 pandemic, but I can only do so much. In order to protect our families, we need paid sick days for all.”

Following the press conference at Lobsterman’s Park in Portland, members of the Maine Work and Family Coalition marched to the Portland Chamber of Commerce to hand deliver copies of the report—along with a gift basket of Kleenex, hand sanitizer, and “get well soon” balloons—and petitioned them to reverse their earlier opposition to paid sick days legislation.

*The Maine Women’s Lobby is a non-partisan, nonprofit, membership organization working since 1978 to increase opportunities for women and girls through advocacy and legislative action. [www.mainewomen.org](http://www.mainewomen.org)*

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