



Our faith teachings support earned sick leave

HB 580/SB 472: Maryland Healthy Working Families Act

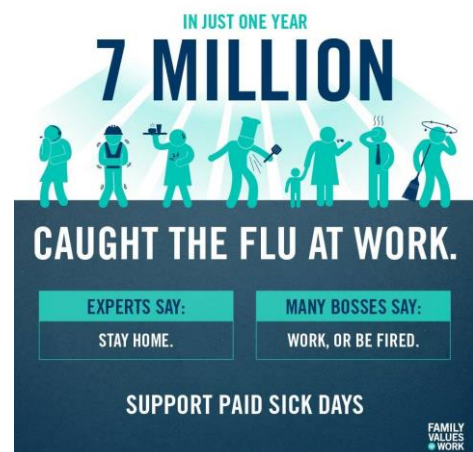
We need to treat all workers with dignity and all work as sacred.

One of the main principals of **Jewish** social justice has always been worker's rights. At the heart of Jewish tradition and religion lies the importance of honest, hard work and maintaining healthy families. The Torah instructs that "you must pay out the wages due on the same day, before the sun sets, for the worker is in need and urgently depends on it," (Deuteronomy 24:14-15). JWFNY grantee [Uri L'Tzedick](#) interprets this as the Torah's reminder of the extent to which workers who earn a low wage depend on their daily wages for their very existence, and that to deny them their wages is unjust.

The Dignity of Work is one of the seven pillars of **Roman Catholic** Social Teaching. On the Feast of St. Joseph in 2013, Pope Francis focused on work as being fundamental to the dignity of a person. He stated, "Work is part of God's loving plan, we are called to cultivate and care for all the goods of creation and in this way share in the work of creation! Work is fundamental to the dignity of a person. Work, to use a metaphor, 'anoints' us with dignity, fills us with dignity, makes us similar to God, who has worked and still works, who always acts (cf. Jn 5:17); it gives one the ability to maintain oneself, one's family, to contribute to the growth of one's own nation." In a 2014 statement the Roman Catholic Bishops of Maryland wrote: "It is in the best interests of all to enact reasonable policies that keep our workplaces healthy by allowing workers to stay home when they or their dependent family members are sick, without undue penalties."¹

From the **United Church of Christ**, we are reminded that Jesus' ministry was one of healing the sick, serving the poor, and honoring the dignity of all. We believe God calls us to do the same. We are also called to love our neighbors. Workers must be able to care for their loved ones without fearing economic hardship or risking the loss of their job. Our faith demands that we speak out for sound social policies that strengthen families, promote economic security, and support workers' rights.

The loss of wages due to illness, the pressure to work while sick or send a child to school who is sick are examples of ways employers undervalue their employees and their labor.



¹ <http://www.mdccathcon.org/library/public/Documents/Statements/14-DignityofWorkBishopsStatement.pdf>

Created by God, we have the responsibility to care for our health and the health of others.

The Torah also instructs us to take care of our health, reminding us that “you shall indeed guard your souls, because our bodies and souls belong to God,” (Deuteronomy 4:15). Rabbi Jill Jacobs of Rabbis for Human Rights-North America explains² how the Talmud connects these teachings of the Torah to show how paying wages to those who depend on them goes hand in hand with the importance of guarding our bodies and souls. According to the Talmud, “A hired laborer must not starve himself or undergo privations, because he diminishes his value as a workman to his employer,” (Talmud, Demai VI 4, 26B). Employers and employees have a common interest in workers’ health and a mutual obligation to ensure the strength of the labor force.

Mindful that our employment practices can sometimes undermine our responsibilities for healthy families, in 2012 the 220th General Assembly of **the Presbyterian Church (USA)** called its members to support employment policies that protect a healthy work-family balance, including paid sick leave. Everyone gets sick, and everyone deserves time to recover without risking their economic stability.

The **United Methodist Church** policy urges us to “support social measures that ensure the physical and mental safety of workers ... (and) support rights of workers to refuse to work in situations that endanger health and/or life without jeopardy to their jobs.”³

Furthermore, support for paid safe days will protect the paychecks and jobs of victims of domestic violence, stalking, or sexual assault when they need time off to seek assistance. Former Presiding Bishop for **the Episcopal Church**, Katharine Jefferts Schori, is quoted as saying “God has given us a mission to care for our neighbors and all of creation. To do so, we must put aside our narrow self-interest to heal the hurting, feed the hungry, set the captives free, and bind up the wounds of creation. I invite you to join in that mission as we advocate for government policies that serve justice, peace, and the dignity of all.”



Marylanders need the ability to earn paid, job-protected sick days that will ensure none of us have to choose between health and economic security.

We uphold the vision given to us from Isaiah: “They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit . . . and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord—and their descendants as well.”

(Isa. 65: 21-23)

² <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-employee-employer-relations/>

³ Work and Leisure, ¶ 163C, The Economic Community, The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church included in The Book of Discipline.