

January 18, 2006

### **Paid leave laws aid working families**

The Sun's article "A parental choice in workplace" (Jan. 11) describes the challenges presented when a child gets sick. But strangely, it focuses on upper-income, two-parent families.

While sick children present complications for parents of all income levels, at least in the cases presented the family has two parents to share the load, the financial wherewithal to purchase help when it is available and benevolent employers who provide paid leave and flexible working conditions to make things much easier.

Not everyone is so fortunate. One-third of all Maryland families are headed by a single parent, half of all workers do not receive any paid sick leave, and others have earned paid time off but are not allowed to use it to care for an ill family member.

These families face even more difficult choices.

Far too often, parents with sick children must take leave without pay when they can hardly afford it. Sometimes when they choose to care for their sick child, it costs them their job.

Juggling family and professional responsibilities is hard for all of us even in the most favorable circumstances.

We need to adopt policies that protect families who are in fragile situations.

Implementing laws to ensure that all workers receive some paid leave and that they will be allowed to use what they have earned to care for an ill family member is a great place to start.

Jason Perkins-Cohen  
Baltimore

*The writer is executive director of the Job Opportunities Task Force.*

Copyright © 2006, [The Baltimore Sun](http://www.baltimoresun.com) /