

# EQUITY FOR ALL KIDS



To: Finance Committee  
From: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel, Executive Director  
Re: SB 241, Maryland Healthy Working Families Act - Applicability  
Date: February 13, 2020  
Position: Oppose

Advocates for Children and Youth strongly opposes SB 241, which exempts an employee from the Healthy Working Families Act who is called to work by a local board of education on an as-needed basis, can reject or accept the shift offered, and is not guaranteed to be called on to work by the local board of education.

We know that paid sick days protect children and families. For a typical family without paid sick days, just 3.5 sick days without pay is equivalent to losing an entire month's grocery budget. With most families working one and two jobs, all of us have faced the challenge of a sick child needing to stay home. And I imagine many, feeling guilty, have dropped a sick child off at school when the child and those at school would be better off with that child at home. For parents without paid sick days, their children are more than twice as likely as parents with paid sick leave to be sent to school or daycare sick.

ACY opposes any changes to the state's Sick and Safe Leave Act. The legislation already includes compromise decisions that limit the impact of this critical safety net. SB 241 would eliminate the ability for substitutes to earn sick and safe leave, and Maryland should not adopt policies that would force any school employees - regular or substitute - to show up for work sick. This puts in jeopardy not only the employee and his or her family, but also children in the school who could be exposed to viral illnesses.

In addition, "presenteeism" or workers underperforming because of illness, is estimated to cost employers \$160 billion per year – twice as much as the cost of absenteeism. Requiring substitutes to teach while sick, or while concerned about a sick loved one, means that the quality of the education those students receive that day will suffer.

Finally, the Healthy Working Families Act already exempts any employee who "regularly works less than 12 hours a week for an employer," so substitutes who only work occasionally are already exempt. The current law reflects a reasonable balance between enabling substitutes with more regular contact with the school community to earn leave, while exempting those who don't regularly work.

Providing paid earned sick and safe leave is an important step toward family economic stability. It results in healthier and stronger children, families and communities. We urge this committee to vote unfavorable on SB 241.

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Advocates for Children and Youth builds a strong Maryland by advancing policies and programs to ensure children and families of every race, ethnicity, and place of birth achieve their full potential.