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If you get sick, you should be able to call in without fear of missing a pay check, or losing a job. Unfortunately almost a million workers in New York City can't count on this basic right.

As a small business owner, I support city legislation that would guarantee paid sick days for all New York City workers.

I am the owner of Terraza 7 Train Café, a small business located in the Elmhurst neighborhood of Queens, New York. I've been in business for over eight years. I immigrated to America nearly a decade ago from Colombia, where I had practiced as a licensed physician. Since then, with my own hands and a team of employees, I have built up my own business from a once-abandoned storefront, into what is now a vibrant center of neighborhood life, where community members gather together and local artists present their work. I now employ ten people – five full-time and five part-time, and I am proud to create jobs for my community.

I believe that every business owner enjoys the benefit of using the infrastructure provided by a system paid for by the taxpayers. I believe that every business should therefore fulfill its debt to society by offering decent working conditions for its employees. As a physician, I understand the risk involved when a community cannot effectively prevent the spread of contagious diseases.

The lack of paid sick-leaves of absence is a factor that may undermine a proper strategy in the case of epidemics. It is undeniable that there will always be huge losses resulting from expensive treatments in emergency room or hospitalizations, relating to problems for which people have postponed treatment out of fear of the medical bills involved.

It is impossible to quantify the emotional and economic cost endured by a family that is unable to take care of a sick child or elderly parent without the risk of losing their income.

Healthy workers make productive workers, and my business will be much stronger if my employees are able to take the time they need to recuperate from illness without worrying about the effect taking a day off will have on their income.

It also will help me create a healthier, germ-free workplace and better serve the customers who come to my restaurant. This makes good business sense to me and it will help the entire community. It also means that those of us who are responsible employers, trying to do the best that we can for our employees, will not be forced to compete with other employers who are trying to cut corners.

In order to address the lack of paid sick days for working New Yorkers, a coalition of community organizations, small businesses, labor unions, restaurant workers, workplace justice advocates and public health advocates have come together to introduce a bill in the City Council would require that employers provide nine paid sick days to all workers.

I'm also a member of Small Business United for Health Care, a coalition of over 600 New York City small businesses and affiliated with the national Main Street Alliance, which is a network of small business groups in 15 states. Our members in New York have strongly endorsed this proposed legislation and urge the City Council and Mayor Bloomberg approve this bill to provide this most basic right to New Yorkers.