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Please find attached DPA’s submission on the **Holidays (Increasing Sick Leave) Amendment Bill.**

## Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

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# Introducing Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

The Disabled Persons Assembly NZ (DPA) is a pan-impairment disabled person’s organisation that works to realise an equitable society, where all disabled people (of all impairment types and including women, Māori, Pasifika, young people) are able to direct their own lives. DPA works to improve social indicators for disabled people and for disabled people be recognised as valued members of society. DPA and its members work with the wider disability community, other DPOs, government agencies, service providers, international disability organisations, and the public by:

* telling our stories and identifying systemic barriers
* developing and advocating for solutions
* celebrating innovation and good practice

# The submission

DPA strongly supports the Holidays (Increasing Sick Leave) Amendment Bill, in particular clause 4, which extends the annual entitlement of sick leave from 5 to 10 days paid sick leave.

The COVID pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of not coming in to work if you have any symptoms in order to protect others and the wider community.

Employees should not have to have to choose between being paid, risking compromising their own health and well-being, or staying at home to protect their workplace colleagues and/or customers from getting sick

Many of the countries with whom we compare ourselves currently provide a higher statutory minimum for sick leave. Australia, for example, provides 10 days paid sick leave per year for workers.

Other high-income economies that we understand require employers to provide paid sick days upwards of 10 days[[1]](#footnote-2), include: the Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Singapore.

Increasing sick leave entitlements is a pragmatic action that the Government can take that will help contain infectious illnesses such as the COVID virus within the wider population and will support disabled people to remain in paid employment.

Policies that support disabled people in employment are particularly important because there is a significant employment gap for disabled people.

The recent Stats NZ disability gap report[[2]](#footnote-3) showed that in 2018, disabled people had an employment rate of 39.1 percent, compared with 78.5 percent for non-disabled and the unemployment rate for disabled people was 12.3 percent, compared with 4.4 percent for non-disabled.

When sick people come to work, viruses are harder to contain. This is problematic for many disabled people who live with chronic health conditions and have compromised immunity or who require ongoing medical treatment or have an existing impairment that is further impacted when ill.

Currently inadequate entitlement of sick leave puts disabled people at risk in their workplaces because their colleagues may come into work when they are unwell and spread the illness to them.

Inadequate sick leave provision also places pressure on disabled people to go to work when they are unwell, or for some, forces them to use annual leave or take unpaid leave to attend any medical treatment or therapy related to their impairment.

The impact of this can be significant given that the extra costs of disability and lower incomes mean that 24.9 percent of disabled people do not have enough money for their everyday needs, compared with 10.0 percent of non-disabled.[[3]](#footnote-4)

For disabled people in employment, access to increased sick leave entitlements will both reduce stress and increase job security, which in turn will help disabled people to stay in paid employment.

Increasing paid sick leave entitlement will also increase the opportunity for disabled people to be able to use their annual leave to take a proper break or spend quality time with family and friends.

For children, particularly disabled children, increasing sick leave provisions will mean that their parents or caregivers will be more likely to able to take sick leave to care for them when they are sick rather than being sent into child care when they should be at home.[[4]](#footnote-5)

# DPA’s recommendations

The Disabled Person’s Assembly strongly supports increasing minimum sick leave entitlements from 5 to 10 days and recommends that the bill be passed.

DPA would like to speak in support of this submission.

1. [The Work, Family, and Equity Index: (worldpolicycenter.org)](https://www.worldpolicycenter.org/sites/default/files/Work%20Family%20and%20Equity%20Index-How%20does%20the%20US%20measure%20up-Jan%202007.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [The disability gap 2018 | Stats NZ](https://www.stats.govt.nz/infographics/the-disability-gap-2018) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [The disability gap 2018 | Stats NZ](https://www.stats.govt.nz/infographics/the-disability-gap-2018) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. [Lifting sick leave from five to 10 days would help women workers | Stuff.co.nz](https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/122825329/lifting-sick-leave-from-five-to-10-days-would-help-women-workers) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)