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Paid Time Off for all Illinois Workers for a Health or Family Need

*Representative Julie Hamos introduces the Family Leave Insurance Program bill
and is supported by the Illinois Paid Leave Coalition*

SPRINGFIELD – On Thursday, February 22, 2007, Representative Julie Hamos will introduce new legislation providing support for workers in need of family or medical leave. The proposed bill, the Family Leave Insurance Program (FLIP), will ensure that all workers in Illinois receive some wages if they need time off for a health or family matter.

Members of the Illinois Paid Leave Coalition will join Representative Hamos and workers sharing their stories about the need for paid leave at a press conference at 1 p.m. in the Capitol's Press Room. The Coalition will hand-deliver to legislators thousands of signed postcards collected from constituents statewide in support of the paid leave program.

"FLIP will help low-wage workers meet their obligations to both job and family," says Melissa Josephs, IL Paid Leave Coalition member and Director of Equal Opportunity Policy at Women Employed.

At some point, most Illinois workers will need time off work for a medical or family reason. Currently, the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides only unpaid leave and applies to employers with 50 or more workers. Many workers are either ineligible for FMLA because they work for small businesses or cannot afford to take unpaid time off.

FLIP will provide up to four weeks of partial wage replacement, up to \$380/week, for an employee's own serious illness, to care for the serious illness of a family member, or for new parents.

"The Family Leave Insurance Program will help workers who live paycheck-to-paycheck and cannot afford to take an unpaid leave under the federal family leave law," said Representative Hamos.

Workers, however, are not the only beneficiaries of FLIP. Small businesses, which are less likely to offer paid time off, will be able to provide their workers this benefit at a modest cost that is shared equally by the employer and employee. Providing this benefit will help small businesses improve employee retention and lower the costs of turnover and re-training.

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The Illinois Paid Leave Coalition is comprised of local and statewide partners that support the creation of a paid leave program for workers who have a health or family need that requires time off from work. For a list of coalition members go to www.womenemployed.org For more information contact: Melissa Josephs at 312-782-3902 X234 or mjosephs@womenemployed.org.