

Daily News: "Labor advocates, small business groups clash over proposed paid sick leave bill" BY Erin Einhorn and Celeste Katz
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITERS

Wednesday, November 18th 2009, 4:00 AM

Labor advocates and small business groups battled over a proposed paid sick leave bill Tuesday - setting up a clash between workers' health and the right of mom-and-pops not to go broke over it. The bill would mandate up to nine days paid leave for people at firms with more than 10 workers, or up to five days at smaller firms. It has widespread support in the City Council, but Mayor Bloomberg hasn't embraced it for smaller companies, making for a potential showdown. The increasingly influential Working Families Party, which endorsed Bloomberg's foe this year, is pushing the bill.

"I think there's reason to be optimistic that the Council will find a way to nudge and poke and prod and bring the mayor along," said WFP Executive Director Dan Cantor.

Business groups testified in a Council hearing that they can't afford to pay for work they don't get. With "thousands of businesses barely hanging on, you have just got to be kidding that you are seriously considering this massive increase in expenses now," said New York State Restaurant Association lawyer Robert Bookman.

Proponents said leave would not only preserve individuals' health, but help curb the spread of ailments such as the H1N1 virus. "Paid sick days is a matter of basic fairness," said Quenia Abreu of the New York Women's Chamber of Commerce.

The sides had wildly differing cost estimates: Kevin Miller of the Institute for Women's Policy Research said at least 850,000 workers would receive leave under the law, costing \$332 million. But a city business coalition pegged the annual cost at \$8.8 billion