



March 13, 2013

New York City Council
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Dear Councilmember:

Common Cause/NY works for effective legislative functioning at all levels of government, advocating for best practices and rules that encourage legislators to be effective advocates for creative solutions to the problems we all face as well as for their constituents. We have long expressed concern that the centralization of power within the Speaker's office is detrimental to the democratic functioning of the New York City Council.

We believe that one important measure of how well a legislative body functions is whether measures with substantial member support progress through the legislative process to a floor vote. The job of a legislature is not to simply write bills, but to debate and, ultimately, vote a measure up or down. Whether a bill ultimately passes or not, the discussion of the issue it addresses in committee and in relation to a floor vote helps educate New Yorkers regarding the public policy proposed and can insure a level of civic discourse vital to a well-functioning democracy. Additionally, constituents are entitled to know their representative's position on the issue at hand, which a floor vote reliably reveals.

By any account, the New York City Council's record in this regard is disappointing. The Human Rights Project's New York City Council 2012 Human Rights Report Card, details 7 bills with 26 or more sponsors (a majority of the Council) that have had a committee hearing but never received a vote. The fact that the NYC Paid Sick Time Act, which is co-sponsored by a majority of the members of the Council, has not yet come up for a vote in the three years since it was first introduced is the most recent manifestation of this problem.

We believe that this state of affairs must change. Accordingly, we seek your answer to the following questions:

Do you believe that the NYC Paid Sick Time Act deserves to receive a vote this session?

Do you support developing procedural reforms that would allow bills with strong support to get a vote on the floor?

You will be receiving calls from our members and other interested constituents, asking your position.

You can learn more about our concerns and the position of other council members on the web at www.commoncause.org/ny/NYCouncilvoting.

Thank you,

Susan Lerner
Executive Director, Common Cause New York