



**EL CENTRO**  
De Igualdad Y Derechos



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**9/9/16**

## **Healthy Workforce ABQ Sues City & County for Blocking Earned Sick Days Initiative**

ALBUQUERQUE—Supporters of the Earned Sick Days ballot initiative sued Bernalillo County and the City of Albuquerque Thursday evening for denying it space on the November ballot.

“The City and County are playing politics with the lives of 107,000 Bernalillo County residents who can’t care for themselves or their kids when they’re sick,” said Adriann Barboa, Field Director of Strong Families New Mexico, a member of the coalition supporting the initiative. “Our Commissioners have the obligation to put a summary of the Earned Sick Days measure on the ballot and followed bad legal advice from the City Attorney in choosing not to.”

Bernalillo County Commissioners voted Thursday not to place a summary of the measure on its November ballot, even though it fits. Several Commissioners suggested that the City Attorney’s opinion weighed heavily on their decision.

In an email to county representatives, Albuquerque City Attorney Jessica Hernandez incorrectly claimed that the full text of the initiative must go on the ballot, rather than a summary.

“The City Attorney claims the full text of the initiative must go on the ballot because she knows it can’t fit,” said Barboa. “Shame on her for standing in the way of voters who followed the law to qualify this proposal for the ballot.”

The City of Albuquerque certified Healthy Workforce ABQ’s 25,000 petition signatures in July, and the City Council directed the measure to go on the ballot the following month, but the Commission denied its request, citing the City Attorney’s insistence on using the full text of the seven-page ordinance.

Attorneys for Healthy Workforce ABQ explained that placing a summary on the ballot would be legal. The New Mexico Supreme Court decided that the use of summaries is legal in its only

opinion on the subject in 1972. The City of Albuquerque has routinely used summaries, and in 2012, the Bernalillo County Commission put a summary of the Albuquerque Minimum Wage Initiative on the ballot.

Veronica Serrano, a mother who missed a month of work due to an illness, spoke about the urgency for voting on the Earned Sick Days proposal at Thursday's hearing. "I worried about losing my house when I was sick. This ordinance would allow employees to earn up to a week of time off, so that wouldn't happen."

Attorneys from the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty filed a complaint § in New Mexico District Court Thursday evening, asking the court to issue an emergency order that the summary be placed on the November ballot.

**For more information, contact Becca Glenn at 505-720-8918.**

**Contact Adriann Barboa and Tim Davis for any further comment or interview.**

**Adriann Barboa: 505-379-1962**

**Tim Davis: (505) 255-2840**

**###**

*\*El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos is a grassroots, immigrants' rights and workers' justice organization based in Albuquerque, NM that works with Latino immigrant communities and allies to defend, strengthen, and advance the rights of our community.*

*For more information visit: [www.elcentronm.org](http://www.elcentronm.org). [Click here](#) to view the statement by El CENTRO on the County Commission's decision to block Healthy Workforce ABQ.*

*\*Healthy Workforce ABQ includes El Centro de Igualdad y Derechos, the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty, OLÉ, Strong Families, SWOP, and other community organizations. For more information visit: [www.healthyworkforceabq.org](http://www.healthyworkforceabq.org)*