

Language Shapes Health Behavior

Not just health — how workers act on it.

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Sickness absence after firm shift

Workers moving to higher-salience firms increased absence rates.

The study found that when employees transitioned to firms with higher well-being salience in their disclosures, they took significantly more sick leave — despite no change in actual health care use. This suggests a behavioral shift, not deteriorating health. The language of corporate reporting may be reshaping employee norms around absence.

Source: National Bureau of Economic Research • Published September 26, 2026
<https://www.nber.org/papers/w35760#fromrss>



01

Disclosures Drive Behavior

For philanthropy through real estate, this reveals a powerful, underused lever: the language of public disclosures can shape donor and steward behavior. A foundation's annual report that emphasizes well-being, not just outcomes, may subtly encourage grantees to prioritize long-term health over short-term metrics — including how they manage and transfer real property. The narrative structure of charitable communication influences action.



02

Tax Policy Meets Cultural Signal

When donors transfer appreciated real estate via charitable remainder trusts or conservation easements, the tax benefit is well-documented. But this study suggests that the **way** the donor or organization communicates its mission — the language used in public reports — may influence how beneficiaries steward that property. A well-being-salient narrative could encourage more sustainable, long-term land use, aligning tax incentives with deeper cultural values in real estate philanthropy.

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