

October 24, 2023

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
The Honorable Michael Bennet  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Donald Beyer  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Wyden, Senator Bennet, and Representative Beyer:

The undersigned organizations write in enthusiastic support of the Unemployment Insurance Modernization and Recession Readiness Act you are introducing. These reforms are an essential step to ensuring a more equitable unemployment insurance system that meets the needs of the modern workforce and economy.

Unemployment Insurance (UI) provides critical economic support to workers, their families and communities, and the U.S. economy. Yet, since its inception, it has failed to meet the needs of far too many jobless workers, particularly during economic downturns, and it continues to operate in much the same way it did when it was enacted in 1935. It is a program that was essentially built for predominantly white and male breadwinners, a construct that simply does not hold up for our modern workforce. This means Black workers, women workers, other workers of color, and disabled workers are disproportionately harmed and excluded from the program because Congress has failed to reform the system to meet their needs.

By failing to modernize the system, Congress must step in during recessions to enact temporary programs that fill in some of the largest gaps in the program. This puts pressure on already strained and under resourced state agencies having to enact new programs overnight and delays much-needed support going to workers and local economies. The pandemic only highlighted this unsustainable reality.

The Unemployment Insurance Modernization and Recession Readiness Act provides critical and long-overdue reforms that will ensure all workers and the nations' economy will be better equipped to withstand periods of unemployment, particularly during the next economic downturn. It does so by:

- **Modernizing the Extended Benefits (EB) Program:** The EB program makes additional weeks of UI benefits available in times of high unemployment but currently does not turn on rapidly enough or stay on long enough. The bill reforms the EB program to ensure the benefits turn on and off at appropriate times to meet the needs of workers, employers, and the economy.
- **Establishing federal standards on benefit adequacy, duration, and eligibility:** The bill will require states to provide at least 26 weeks of benefits, sets a minimum benefit amount to ensure benefits are sufficient for workers to afford necessities, and ensures states provide benefits to low-paid workers, part-time workers, and workers who must leave their jobs for compelling personal reasons, such as needing to care for a family member.

- **Creating a Job Seeker Allowance for individuals re-entering the labor market:** A jobseeker allowance would provide benefits to workers who are currently not covered by the UI system but are looking for jobs. This includes self-employed workers, recent graduates, formerly incarcerated workers, disabled workers, and parents and caregivers returning to the workforce.

Passing this bill is an important step in ensuring all workers have economic security when they are in between jobs and lays the groundwork for transforming the nation's unemployment insurance system to ensure all workers can thrive.

Sincerely,

A Better Balance  
AFL-CIO  
Alabama Arise  
American Federation of Teachers  
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)  
Anne Arundel County Food Bank, Inc.  
Arizona Center for Economic Progress  
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence  
Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)  
Blanchard & Walker PLLC  
California Employment Lawyers Association  
California Immigrant Policy Center  
Care in Action  
Caring Across Generations  
CASH Campaign of Maryland  
Catholic Charities Worcester County  
Center for Law and Social Policy  
Center for New York City Affairs at The New School  
Center for Popular Democracy  
Center for Workers' Rights  
Chicago Jobs Council  
Chinese for Affirmative Action  
Claimant Advocacy Program, MWC  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Colorado Center on Law and Policy  
Colorado Fiscal Institute  
Community Change Action  
Connecticut Legal Services  
CRLA Foundation  
Detroit Action  
Economic Opportunity Institute  
Economic Policy Institute  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Every Texan  
Fish Potter Bolanos, P.C.

Florida Policy Institute  
Food Research & Action Center  
Fund Excluded Workers Coalition  
Georgia Alliance to End Homelessness  
Grand Canyon Institute  
Greater Boston Legal Services  
Greater Hartford Legal Aid  
Hunger Free Vermont  
Impact Fund  
In The Public Interest  
Indiana Community Action Poverty Institute  
Jewish Women International  
Jobs to Move America  
Jobs With Justice  
Kentucky Center for Economic Policy  
Kentucky Equal Justice Center  
Keystone Research Center  
Kreitman Law, LLC  
Legal Aid At Work  
Legal Aid Justice Center  
Long Island Cares, Inc. - The Harry Chapin Food Bank  
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank  
Maine Center for Economic Policy  
Maine Equal Justice  
Maine People's Alliance  
Make the Road NJ  
Michigan League For Public Policy  
MomsRising  
Mon Valley Unemployed Committee  
Mountain State Justice, Inc.  
NAACP  
National Action Network  
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities  
National Black Justice Coalition  
National Center for Law and Economic Justice  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Domestic Workers Alliance  
National Education Association  
National Employment Law Project  
National Employment Lawyers Association  
National Institute for Workers' Rights  
National Network to End Domestic Violence  
National Organization for Women  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

National Women's Law Center  
New Haven Legal Assistance Association  
New Jersey Association on Correction  
New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty  
New Mexico Voices for Children  
New York Communities for Change  
New York Legal Assistance Group  
NH Legal Assistance  
North Carolina Justice Center  
Oregon Food Bank  
Oxfam America  
Philadelphia Unemployment Project  
Policy Matters Ohio  
Prosperity Now  
Public Citizen  
Public Justice Center  
Restaurant Opportunities Centers United  
Safe Harbor Law, LLC  
Santa Clara County Wage Theft Coalition  
Service Employees International Union  
Shriver Center on Poverty Law  
Southern Maine Workers' Center  
Sugar Law Center for Economic & Social Justice  
Sur Legal Collaborative  
Tahirih Justice Center  
The National Domestic Violence Hotline  
The New York Women's Foundation  
Unemployment Law Project  
Unemployed Workers United  
Union for Reform Judaism  
United for a Fair Economy  
United Steelworkers (USW)  
URGE: Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity  
Victor Forberger, Wisconsin atty  
Virginia Poverty Law Center  
Washington State Budget and Policy Center  
West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy  
William E. Morris Institute for Justice  
Women Employed  
Workplace Fairness  
Workplace Justice Lab at Rutgers University  
Workplace Justice Project at Loyola Law Clinic