



# children's defense fund minnesota

Jobs and Economic Development Finance Division  
Minnesota House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee,

We would like to thank you for recognizing the importance of Unemployment Insurance for Youth by spending your valuable committee time considering this critical issue.

**As the COVID-19 pandemic continues its devastating impact on Minnesota's economy, CDF-MN has been focused on making sure none of our working families and children are left behind in the state response and that disparities are not exacerbated. Within that framework, we urge the Committee to prioritize youth unemployment insurance legislation during the upcoming special session.** Many of the young people who have lost their jobs are supporting families (as a parent themselves or part of an extended family where all contribute), are independent or are investing in their economic prospects by working their way through school. The current policy creates the potential unintended consequence and perverse incentive for students that must support themselves or their families during these unprecedented times to drop-out of school – resulting in a cascade of negative outcomes for them, their families and the state.

**Minnesota is the only state we are aware of that denies enrolled high school students, who would otherwise be eligible, access to state Unemployment Insurance and federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance.** This means Minnesota's economy and striving young people are losing access to this federal benefit that is vital to their own and the state's economic recovery.

**Eligibility must be expanded to all students, not just those 18 and older.** Whether it is through our work convening the Voices and Choices for Children Coalition, over forty community listening sessions throughout the state, our long-standing Freedom Schools partnerships in support of Minnesota's indigenous youth and youth from communities of color, and partnership with youth led initiatives, we have heard loud and clear the important role youth play in making the economics work for their families.

Minnesota has been working hard to address economic disparities that are among the worst in the nation. **We know overall that communities of color have been disproportionately affected by unemployment during the pandemic, youth are no exception.** Denying youth this support jeopardizes hard won gains and critical economic stability for youth, their families, and the state. CDF-MN is committed to ensuring every Minnesota child has a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life ***and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.*** Join us in making sure youth are not left behind as we all work to recover from COVID-19.

Bharti Wahi  
Executive Director

Debra Fitzpatrick  
Policy and Legislative Affairs Director