



April 27, 2021

Dear Members of the House and Senate Conference Committee on SF1098:

The Legal Services Advocacy Project (LSAP) appreciates the opportunity to provide written comments on the unemployment insurance provisions in the side-by-side prepared for SF1098. LSAP is a statewide division of Legal Aid, providing policy advocacy on issues affecting low-wealth Minnesotans, children, seniors, and people with disabilities in legislative and administrative forums. LSAP is also a member of the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Advisory Council.

For more than a decade, Legal Aid has worked tirelessly to ensure Minnesota's UI system serves all workers and to dismantle those policies and practices that bar access for Minnesotans who are less familiar with the process or are unrepresented in their claims. Legal Aid continues to have serious concerns about the ways in which the system remains closed to people of color and women who work in lower-wage occupations.

UI Appeal Extension for Employers and Employees

LSAP is grateful for the House inclusion of a technical improvement to the unemployment insurance appeal statute, giving employers and employees 60 days to appeal an unemployment insurance determination rather than the current restrictive 20 days (House Line 146.19). We hope this provision will be included in the final conference agreement.

UI for Youth, Seniors and Hourly School Staff

LSAP enthusiastically supports the provisions that will strengthen access to unemployment insurance for all Minnesotans, including removal of barriers to unemployment insurance for:

- Youth workers who are attending high school (Senate Line 67.14; House Line 142.7);
- Senior workers who also access social security benefits (Senate Line 68.13; House Line 143.4); and
- Hourly school staff who are between academic terms (House Line 144.6).

However, we are extremely concerned about the delayed implementation of access improvements for youth and seniors in the Senate bill. We support the House position that includes immediate implementation.

LSAP is grateful for the conversations taking place about strengthening equity in a UI system that has long and disproportionately denied benefits to certain types of workers, including low-wage workers, youth, seniors, and people of color. Many of these workers should be eligible for unemployment insurance but are denied access due to unfair restrictions written into law.

We appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "d. h.", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Staff Attorney
Legal Services Advocacy Project