



April 6, 2021

The Honorable Mohamud Noor, Chair
Workforce & Bus. Dev. Finance and Policy Comm.
Minnesota House of Representatives
379 State Office Building
St Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Rod Hamilton, Republican Lead
Workforce & Bus. Dev. Finance and Policy Comm.
Minnesota House of Representatives
277 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Jay Xiong, Vice Chair
Workforce & Bus. Dev. Finance and Policy Comm.
573 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Noor, Vice Chair Xiong, Lead Hamilton, and Members of the Committee:

The Legal Services Advocacy Project (LSAP) writes in support of Article 6 in the DE to HF 1342 to strengthen access to unemployment insurance for all Minnesotans. LSAP is a statewide division of Legal Aid, providing policy advocacy on issues affecting low-wealth Minnesotans, children, seniors, and Minnesotans with disabilities in legislative and administrative forums. LSAP is also a member of the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Advisory Council.

Legal Aid has engaged in unemployment insurance access work for more than a decade. We have worked tirelessly over the years 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 who work in lower-wage occupations. To that end, LSAP specifically highlights the following provisions in HF 1342:

- Removal of barriers to unemployment insurance for:
 - Youth workers who are attending high school (Line 140.16);
 - Senior workers who also access social security benefits (Line 141.6); and
 - School employees and staff who are unemployed between school terms (Line 141.30)
- Ensuring all employees and employers are able to appeal an unemployment insurance determination within 60 calendar days (rather than the current restrictive 20 days) (Line 143.20).

These changes to Minnesota's unemployment insurance laws represent an important first step in strengthening equity in a system that has long and disproportionately denied benefits to certain types of workers, including low-wage workers, women, 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 and urge passage of Article 6 in the DE to HF 1342.

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