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October 15, 2020

Senator Robert Menendez
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Senator Cory Booker
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Congressman Donald Norcross
2437 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Jeff Van Drew
331 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Andy Kim
1516 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Christopher Smith
2373 Rayburn House Office Building
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Congressman Josh Gottheimer
213 Cannon House Office Building
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Congressman Frank Pallone
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Congressman Tom Malinowski
426 Cannon House Office Building
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Congressman Albio Sires
2268 Rayburn House Office Building
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Congressman Bill Pascrell
2409 Rayburn House Office Building
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Congressman Donald Payne
103 Cannon House Office Building
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Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill
1208 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman
2442 Rayburn Office Building,
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) Program

Dear New Jersey Congressional Delegation Members:

As the Garden State's largest business association, we write again to thank you for your ongoing advocacy for the businesses and residents of New Jersey. CARES Act funding and initiatives have helped the state weather the public health and economic catastrophes. Today, we write to urge your support for reforms to the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program. PUA has been effective in assisting those who do not typically qualify for Unemployment Insurance (UI) and who are experiencing financial strain through no fault of their own. However, certain eligibility criteria have wrongly excluded some who should be eligible for the program.

The Issue

To qualify for PUA benefits, an individual must first be denied regular UI benefits. Seemingly, this makes sense since those served by PUA (independent contractors, self-employed, and

gig workers) are ineligible for regular UI benefits. However, some individuals are self-employed and work part-time for another entity. Although they receive a substantial portion of their income from their self-employment, they also supplement that with income from their part-time work. Likely, this has become more common during the pandemic as individuals' self-employed or gig work income dried up due to government-mandated shutdowns and the subsequent economic downturn. If their part-time work makes them eligible for UI benefits, then they are automatically disqualified from receiving PUA benefits. Clearly, the rules for PUA did not anticipate these circumstances.

The biggest issue with this is that the UI benefits individuals are receiving, in coordination with their part-time work, are far less than the PUA benefits they would receive in coordination with the income they earned through self-employment or gig work. Since they cannot receive PUA and regular UI benefits, they are only receiving UI benefits that reflect a very small portion of their former income.

The Solution

The current rules for PUA eligibility need to be revised to accommodate this type of situation and we encourage you to support any reforms that are proposed. Ideally, the existing legislation would be amended to allow individuals to collect the benefits they are eligible for under PUA, in relation to the income they earned when they were self-employed or an independent contractor, and then collect any additional benefits they are eligible for as part-time workers from the regular UI fund up to each state's respective weekly benefit cap. In New Jersey, that cap is \$713/week.

The rules for PUA are the same in each state and, therefore, this situation is likely occurring in other states where independent contractors, the self-employed, and gig workers have taken on part-time work to cope with the financial strain related to this pandemic. Consequently, there should be broad support for such reforms as the benefits will be felt nationwide.

We urge your support for reforms to the PUA so that all New Jersey residents who need those benefits will be eligible. Otherwise, the program will fail those that it was created to serve.

Respectfully,



Chrissy Buteas
Chief Government Affairs Officer