



## HB 44 – UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION RESTRICTION CHANGES

The pandemic leaves many New Mexicans with impossible choices between protecting their health and meeting basic needs.

This bill amends the Unemployment Compensation Law to respond to the current public health emergency with provisions to temporarily expand Unemployment Insurance eligibility. These provisions protect workers who are unable to work due to conditions related to the pandemic.

### WHAT'S THE NEED?

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted nearly every part of New Mexican's lives. Health, education, family responsibilities, employment, and so much more have been disrupted by this public health crisis. We owe it to NM residents to do all we can to mitigate those impacts.

### HOW DOES COVID-19 IMPACT EMPLOYMENT?

COVID-19 threatens employment in several ways:

- Workplaces are forced to close or reduce the number of people working at individual worksites due to public health orders issued to protect the health of customers and essential workers, particularly when working at home is not an option.
- Employees may be required to quarantine after exposure or diagnosis of COVID-19.
- Some workers will be unable to return to work safely during the public health emergency because of underlying health conditions that make them more susceptible to COVID-19.
- Some workers need to care for a family member who has been diagnosed and/or who is seriously ill with COVID-19.
- COVID-related childcare and school closures prevent working parents from working or seeking work.

### WHO IS IMPACTED?

- Women, especially women of color, have been most impacted by the COVID-19 recession.<sup>1</sup> With a higher concentration of jobs in the hard hit service industry and more caregiving responsibilities for both children and elders, women have borne the brunt of COVID-related job and income loss.
- In the most recent U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey, NM adults living in households with children under 17 reported the following:<sup>2</sup>
  - 58% reported a loss of income since March 13, 2020;
  - 87% reported not receiving any pay for time not working;
  - 51% reported difficulty managing regular household expenses during the last week;
  - 20% reported difficulty getting enough food to eat in the last week (up from 15% pre-pandemic).
- Each year, 419,000 New Mexicans provide unpaid caregiving for elders.<sup>3</sup>
- New Mexicans face higher than average rates of pre-existing conditions that make them more susceptible to COVID-19.<sup>4</sup>

### FEDERAL EMERGENCY PROVISIONS ARE NOT ENOUGH FOR NM WORKERS.

For questions or comments, please contact the Southwest Women's Law Center:  
505-604-3243 or [info@swwomenslaw.org](mailto:info@swwomenslaw.org)



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- Families First Coronavirus Relief Act (FFCRA) offered limited emergency paid sick and paid family leave protections for workers impacted by COVID-19, but those limited protections expired on December 31, 2020.<sup>5</sup>
- The Coronavirus Relief & Omnibus Agreement extends Pandemic Unemployment Insurance (PUA) protections to workers who would usually be ineligible, including independent contractors, part-time workers, freelancers, and others until March 14, 2021.<sup>6</sup>
- The Coronavirus Relief & Omnibus Agreement also reauthorizes \$300 supplemental benefits for those receiving Unemployment benefits from December 26, 2020 through March 14, 2021. The 13 week extension of UI benefits, offered in CARES Act, have now expired.<sup>6</sup>

## WHAT TO KNOW

- This temporary expansion of eligibility criteria for Unemployment Insurance will fill the gaps left by federal policy and **ensure that New Mexicans can maintain economic stability** during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The bill would offer temporary protections for individuals unable to participate in the workforce due to:
  - Exposure to or diagnosis of COVID-19;
  - Need to provide care to a family member diagnosed with COVID-19;
  - An underlying medical condition that makes an individual more susceptible to COVID-19;
  - A COVID-19 related workplace closure;
  - Child care being unavailable due to COVID-19.
- Most Federal provisions expired on December 31, 2020. Those that were extended are still set to expire by March 14, 2021. However, we expect that COVID-19 will impact economic stability throughout the declared public health emergency. **This bill would provide relief to New Mexico families until January 1, 2023.**

## PLEASE HELP US PASS TEMPORARY ELIGIBILITY EXPANSION FOR UI!

Endorsed by:

NM Voices for Children	Southwest Women’s Law Center	NM Religious Coalition for Reproductive Justice
Fathers NM	NM Center on Law & Poverty	Professional Business Women of New Mexico
OLÉ Education Fund	NAPAWF - Albuquerque Chapter	Center for Civic Policy
NM Public Health Association	HEAL+NM	Interfaith Worker Justice NM
Respect NM Women		NOISE for NOW

### References:

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2. KIDS COUNT Data Center from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Accessed January 4, 2021. <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#NM/2/0/char/0/271>
3. NM Aging and Long-term Care Department. *Caregivers*. Accessed June 12, 2020. <http://www.nmaging.state.nm.us/caregivers.aspx>
4. Gallagher L. *The State of Health in New Mexico 2018*. Published 2018:103.
5. COVID-19 and the American Workplace | U.S. Department of Labor. Accessed January 4, 2021. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic>
6. U.S. Department of Labor. *Continued Assistance for Unemployed Workers Act of 2020 (Continued Assistance Act) - Summary of Key Unemployment Insurance (UI) Provisions*. Accessed January 4, 2021. [https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr\\_doc.cfm?DOCN=3831](https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=3831)