



City of Philadelphia

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
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Philadelphia, PA 19107

Legislation Text

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Urging the Pennsylvania General Assembly and Governor Tom Wolf to reject House Bill 508, the “Coerce to Work” legislation, intended to end Pennsylvania’s participation in three federal pandemic unemployment benefit programs.

WHEREAS, since March 2020, the CARES Act provided 100% federally funded unemployment benefits to jobless Pennsylvanians, which the American Rescue Plan has extended through September 2021; and

WHEREAS, HB 508 would end Pennsylvania's participation in the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program, which provides unemployed individuals an extra \$300 per week in addition to state-provided unemployment compensation; and

WHEREAS, HB 508 would also end Pennsylvania’s participation in the federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program, which has provided during the pandemic unemployment benefits for individuals who are not eligible for traditional state unemployment compensation, like independent contractors or sole-proprietors; and

WHEREAS, HB 508 would also end Pennsylvania’s participation in the federal Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) program, which has extended unemployment benefits so that individuals can receive benefits throughout the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, HB 508 would reject these 100% federally-funded unemployment benefits while also diverting American Rescue Plan recovery dollars toward a “Back-to-Work Bonus Program,” rather than funding vital services that would lift millions of Pennsylvanians out of poverty; and

WHEREAS, More than one million Pennsylvanians stand to lose unemployment benefits upon the passage of HB 508, and the Commonwealth’s economy stands to lose roughly \$6.735 billion in consumer spending, or roughly \$6,390 per worker through September 6, 2021; and

WHEREAS, Jobless Pennsylvanians have relied on unemployment funds to cover the costs of housing, medical expenses due to lost health care coverage, groceries, or even their phone and car bills; and

WHEREAS, Black families in Pennsylvania have been hit hardest by the pandemic, and cutting unemployment benefits would further exacerbate the negative impact of COVID-19 that the American Rescue Plan was enacted to rectify; and

WHEREAS, gig workers, domestic workers, and self-run business owners, who are disproportionately Black

and brown, are excluded from the traditional state unemployment program and would stand to lose pandemic benefits if Pennsylvania ends its participation in the PUA program; and

WHEREAS, unemployment benefits have provided working families with a safety net as schools have remained closed and childcare options have been limited, and cutting benefits without increasing access to childcare will lead to less participation in virtual schooling and less adult supervision during an extreme gun violence epidemic impacting our City; and

WHEREAS, Economists have repeatedly dismissed unsupported claims by Republican lawmakers that perceived labor shortages were induced by extensive federal stimulus payment and unemployment benefits; and

WHEREAS, those same Republican legislators have rejected ongoing efforts to both relieve the plight inflicted on workers, their families, and the economy by the pandemic and to build a more equitable economy and society for all Pennsylvanians, with the refusal to increase the minimum wage at all, let alone to a living wage, being the most glaring; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby urge the Pennsylvania General Assembly and Governor Tom Wolf to reject House Bill 508.