



Legislative Building  
Olympia, WA 98504-0482

## Washington State Legislature

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March 23, 2020

The Honorable Patty Murray, U.S. Senator  
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, U.S. Senator  
The Honorable Suzan DelBene, U.S. Representative, 1st District  
The Honorable Rick Larsen, U.S. Representative, 2nd District  
The Honorable Jaime Herrera Beutler, U.S. Representative, 3rd District  
The Honorable Dan Newhouse, U.S. Representative, 4th District  
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers, U.S. Representative, 5th District  
The Honorable Derek Kilmer, U.S. Representative, 6th District  
The Honorable Pramila Jayapal, U.S. Representative, 7th District  
The Honorable Kim Schrier, U.S. Representative, 8th District  
The Honorable Adam Smith, U.S. Representative, 9th District  
The Honorable Denny Heck, U.S. Representative, 10th District  
United States Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Remove Federal Barriers to Disaster Unemployment Assistance

Dear Members of the Washington State Congressional Delegation:

In these uncertain times, we need to act to protect all workers, especially those who don't have access to unemployment insurance assistance. These workers include those considered by employers to be independent contractors in the gig economy and those who are self-employed. We are hearing from these workers about the economic difficulties caused by the coronavirus pandemic. This threatens their livelihoods and the strength of the broader economy.

Therefore, on behalf of the Senate and House Democratic Caucuses, we ask the Congressional Delegation to work with the Administration to ensure that Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) can be applied to pandemics in the same manner as to natural disasters when a federal emergency is declared. This will enable more Americans to have access to Unemployment Insurance (UI) without some of the standard eligibility requirements.

Disaster Unemployment Assistance would provide financial assistance to individuals whose employment or self-employment has been lost or interrupted as a direct result of a major disaster and who are not eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits.

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When a major disaster has been declared by the President, DUA is generally available to any unemployed worker or self-employed individual who lived, worked, or was scheduled to work in the disaster area at the time of the disaster; and who, due to the disaster:

- no longer has a job or a place to work; or
- cannot reach the place of work; or
- cannot work due to damage to the place of work; or
- cannot work because of an injury caused by the disaster.

DUA benefits are payable to individuals for up to 26 weeks after the date the disaster was declared by the President.

While the President approved Washington's request to declare a major disaster in Washington related to COVID-19, the Administration is still considering the request to activate DUA as part of the declaration. We urge the Congressional Delegation to request the Administration unlock these vital benefits for our workers and businesses.

We understand the tremendous challenges you face in responding to the coronavirus crisis. Access to these additional benefits will make sure businesses and workers have a greater ability to get through this challenging situation. Thank you for considering this path to extend a safety net for our constituents who are considered independent contractors and who are self-employed and shore up our country's economy during this uncertain time.

Sincerely,



Senator Karen Keiser  
Chair, Labor & Commerce Committee



Representative Mike Sells  
Chair, Labor & Workplace Standards Committee



Senator Andy Billig  
Majority Leader, State Senate



Representative Laurie Jenkins  
Speaker, State House of Representatives

Cc: Governor Jay Inslee  
Drew Shirk, Executive Director of Legislative Affairs, Governor Inslee

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