



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

State Senate Passes Business Unemployment Insurance Bill Pushed By Helming

PAMELA HELMING January 19, 2021

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The State Senate today passed a bill that protects employers from paying higher unemployment insurance rates as a result of pandemic-related closures or layoffs. The bill was nearly identical to legislation authored and introduced by Senator Helming last summer.

“The passage of this bill is good news for employers impacted by pandemic shutdowns, particularly our small businesses,” said Senator Pam Helming. “It means an employer’s unemployment insurance rate will not be impacted by COVID-related closures or layoffs. I want to thank the many local employers who reached out to me, and the dozens of business advocacy groups who spoke out on this bill, including The Business Council of New York State, National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), and Unshackle Upstate.”

“We supported the Senate’s approval today of unemployment insurance tax relief for 2021, which addresses one of many adverse impacts of COVID on New York State employers, and we appreciate Senator Helming’s early leadership on this issue. This doesn’t solve the state’s UI tax problems, but it will lessen the impact on hard-pressed employers still facing economic hardship,” said Ken Pokalsky, Vice President, The Business Council of New York State.

“Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Senator Helming has been a relentless advocate for struggling small businesses on the issues that matter most, like protecting against surprise unemployment insurance premium charges caused by pandemic-related workforce reductions,” said Greg Biryła, New York State Director, National Federation of Independent Business. “Additional action is necessary to stabilize the state’s unemployment insurance system and address the unprecedented challenges facing small businesses. NFIB looks forward to continuing our work with Senator Helming and her legislative colleagues to ensure New York’s economic recovery begins on ‘Main Street.’”

“Freezing the unemployment insurance experience rating is good news for struggling employers,” said Zach Sampson, Unshackle Upstate spokesperson. “Considering that 27 percent of New York’s small businesses have closed over the last year, it’s essential that our leaders in Albany do everything in their power to provide certainty and relief to employers. As we move forward, we encourage legislators to advance additional pro-growth measures that will get our economy growing.”

Specifically under the bill, an employer’s experience rating, used to determine its unemployment insurance rate, will not be charged for benefits paid to employees as a result of the business’s closure, mandated or otherwise, due to COVID-19.

“I have been advocating for this legislation since last summer when I introduced my own bill, and it is great that we were able to get this done for our local employers,” added Senator Helming. “There is still a lot of work ahead to help businesses not only reopen but stay open, and retain local jobs. I will continue to fight to support our businesses and get people back to work.”