



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew Gounardes

## Senator Andrew Gounardes Announces New Legislation to Strengthen and Expand Unemployment Benefits

ANDREW GOUNARDES April 20, 2020

| ISSUE: **UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE, COVID-19**

**Albany, NY** - Senator Andrew Gounardes today announced a package of bills designed to dramatically increase access to unemployment benefits in the wake of massive job loss due to the coronavirus crisis.

**The Reduced Hours Unemployment Bill** automatically provides eligible businesses with information on the Department of Labor's shared work program and allows them to enroll retroactively so their employees can receive unemployment benefits for reduced hours. This will allow New Yorkers who have been furloughed or received reduced hours to stay afloat financially while helping small businesses to maintain jobs until after the crisis subsides. People in a wide variety of fields, including restaurants, retail workers, lawyers and local journalists have been furloughed or had hours reduced since the pandemic began.

**The Unemployment Notification Bill** requires businesses to inform workers of their eligibility to apply for unemployment if they have not received hours in seven days. Many workers are unaware that they have the right to these benefits even if they have not been laid off.

**The Health and Safety Unemployment Eligibility Act** allows those 65+ or at especially high risk of complications from Covid-19 or who live with someone in those categories to access

unemployment insurance if they have to quit their jobs. Many New Yorkers who are considered essential workers during the Covid-19 crisis may be senior citizens or have underlying conditions that leave them vulnerable to coronavirus.

**Unemployment Eligibility with Severance Bill** allows New Yorkers to have access to unemployment even if they take a severance or a payout throughout the course of the pandemic.

“Unemployment insurance is the lifeline for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers right now who have found themselves with reduced hours, furloughed or laid off through no fault of their own. We must guarantee that these urgently needed funds reach New Yorkers. These bills prioritize getting working people the funding they need to keep their heads above water in the midst of this devastating crisis,” said State Senator Andrew Gounardes.

New York State AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento said, "This package of bills will not only ease the burden for people currently out of work during this health crisis but just as important, it will remove existing barriers for men and women who for a variety of reasons related to COVID-19 find themselves unable to work. These bills will also help to lay the groundwork for the transition out of this national emergency. We thank Senator Gounardes for his leadership and foresight on this critical issue."