



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Alessandra Biaggi

Senator Biaggi and colleagues send a letter to Majority Leader Schumer requesting for the federal government to continue expanded pandemic unemployment benefits for New Yorkers.

ALESSANDRA BIAGGI September 17, 2021

Dear Majority Leader Schumer:

Thank you for your continued efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and your work to protect New Yorkers from the virus. Earlier this year as vaccine rollouts were underway, many of us were hopeful for a full and timely return to workplace normalcy this year. The unfortunate reality is that our communities are still struggling and the end of expanded pandemic unemployment benefits came at a perilous time. One thing is abundantly clear — for those who have experienced the most hardship and loss during COVID-19, this pandemic is far from over. We are gravely concerned about the end of the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), and request that the federal government provide additional funds to states who wish to continue those programs. Moreover, we request additional federal funding or forgiveness to cover some of New Yorks' unemployment debt.

An estimated 7.5 million Americans lost their full benefits or supplemental benefits with the expiration of these programs, including 1.2 million New Yorkers. As of September 6th, 745,548

New Yorkers were receiving PUA. These New Yorkers have been left without any support. An additional 474,402 New Yorkers were receiving FPUC and have lost vital supplemental funds they received each week.

Although unemployment rates are down relative to the beginning of the pandemic, many remain out of work and future job growth is imperiled by the Delta variant. New York State has had an unemployment rate of 7.7% since July 2021, which is significantly higher than the national average of 5.4%. New York City's rate remains even higher at 10.2%. Some have argued that extending unemployment benefits will further delay people's return to the workforce. Yet, there is no evidence that ending these pandemic benefits will incentivize people to return to work. Instead, millions of families will be left without the support they have been relying on to survive.

Furthermore, the impact of the unemployment crisis has hit American workers unevenly, with certain racial, socioeconomic and gender groups impacted more than others. Workers of color continue to bear the brunt of the COVID-19 labor market crisis. The current national unemployment rate for Black workers is 9.2%—a rate that would likely be declared a national emergency if it were impacting the entire population. Additionally, there are still 1.79 million women who have been forced out of their jobs as a result of the ongoing effects of the pandemic. Notably, because most were not laid off, these workers who are not eligible for traditional state unemployment have been utilizing federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). Now with the suspension of PUA, these individuals will have no support.

Although the federal government urged states with high unemployment rates to continue issuing expanded unemployment benefits, New York is legally unable to allocate funds due to our deficit. As of September 2nd, New York State owes \$9 billion in outstanding unemployment debt to the federal government. State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli has estimated that New York's unemployment taxes on employers may increase by 30.5%

compared to 2020, and may increase by as much as 45% by 2025 in order to pay the debt and interest. New York has only been able to repay \$1 billion of its debt accrued during the pandemic, thus far. Without additional funding from the federal government or debt forgiveness, New York's debt may place an undue burden on businesses and stifle our economic recovery. Moreover, it makes it impossible for New York to consider continuing lapsed federal pandemic unemployment programs without federal support.

We are working to ensure that supporting the unemployed and getting New Yorkers back to work is a priority of the state under Governor Hochul's new Executive administration. But New York State cannot shoulder the cost alone. The price of covering these programs is prohibitive for states like New York with high unemployment and communities still in dire need for relief due to the ongoing pandemic. We urge the federal government to extend funding for these vital programs PUA, PEUC, and FPUC as our communities continue to recover from the pandemic.

With Gratitude,

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Alessandra Biaggi

New York State Senator, District 34

Jabari Brisport, New York State Senator, District 25

Andrew Gounardes, New York State Senator, District 22

Brad Hoylman, New York State Senator, District 27

Robert Jackson, New York State Senator, District 31

Liz Krueger, New York State Senator, District 28

Rachel May, New York State Senator, District 53

Jessica Ramos, New York State Senator, District 13

Gustavo Rivera, New York State Senator, District 33

Sean Ryan, New York State Senator, District 60

Julia Salazar, New York State Senator, District 18

Jose Serrano, New York State Senator, District 29

Charles Barron, New York State Assembly Member, District 60

Chris Burdick, New York State Assembly Member, District 93

Maritza Davila, New York State Assembly Member, District 53

Carmen De La Rosa, New York State Assembly Member, District 72

Steve Englebright, New York State Assembly Member, District 4

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Dan Quart, New York State Assembly Member, District 73

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Linda Rosenthal, New York State Assembly Member, District 67

Nily Rozic, New York State Assembly Member, District 25

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David Weprin, New York State Assembly Member, District 24

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Emily Gallagher, New York State Assembly Member, District 50

Deborah Glick, New York State Assembly Member, District 66

Michaëlle Solages, New York State Assembly Member, District 22

Khaleel Anderson, New York State Assembly Member, District 31

Patricia Fahy, New York State Assembly Member, District 109

Nathalia Fernandez, New York State Assembly Member, District 80

Phara Forrest, New York State Assembly Member, District 57

Richard Gottfried, New York State Assembly Member, District 75

Demond Meeks, New York State Assembly Member, District 137

Marcela Mitaynes, New York State Assembly Member, District 51

Gary Pretlow, New York State Assembly Member, District 89

Robert Rodriguez, New York State Assembly Member, District 68

Al Taylor, New York State Assembly Member, District 71

CC: US Senator Kirsten Gillibrand

CC: US Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh

CC: New York State Governor Kathy Hochul

CC: New York Congressional Delegation