



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

June 2, 2021

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.  
Governor of Maryland  
State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Hogan:

We implore you to reconsider your intent to discontinue Maryland's participation in the federal unemployment insurance extension as of July 3, 2021. Despite the tremendous strides Maryland has made in economic recovery, tens of thousands of people continue to struggle finding employment that matches their skill sets and allows them to afford basic living expenses such as child care, rent, and utilities. We recognize that a once-in-100-year pandemic event is having unexpected impacts on our labor supply and demand markets. There is no debate that our economic conditions are in uncharted territory and that a balance of competing interests exists to return Maryland to full employment where Maryland workers experience the dignity of work at living wages in safe working conditions. While Maryland businesses try to navigate these uncertain conditions, so too do countless Marylanders who have faced unimaginable hardships throughout this pandemic. They deserve greater predictability from Maryland's post-COVID safety net than would result from the unexpected decision yesterday to cut Marylanders' income and reject federal unemployment insurance funding allocated to our State.

The notion that terminating extended unemployment insurance benefits, intended to help Americans weather a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, will somehow reinvigorate our economy is shortsighted and hurtful to so many. We know that Marylanders receiving unemployment insurance benefits are using that money to benefit local economies and small businesses across our State while meeting the basic needs of daily life. Instead,

pulling the rug out from Marylanders previously unable to access traditional unemployment insurance benefits means the entrepreneur whose catering business has yet to recover as large events remain few and far between will have to choose between losing their business, or life savings. It means the gig worker who cannot return to work because they have an autoimmune disorder and cannot receive the vaccine will be forced to choose between risking their life, or putting food on the table.

We know you understand the impossible position your decision puts tens of thousands of Marylanders in and the unimaginable choices it will force them to make. We also know that simply pulling Maryland out of the federal unemployment insurance extension program is not our only choice.

States like Colorado are taking a more prudent approach of incentivizing residents to accept positions, instead of unnecessarily harming people based on an unsupported conservative narrative. Colorado Jumpstart is a new program that began last week. It provides a financial bonus to individuals utilizing unemployment insurance benefits who return to work between May 16 and June 26, and remain in that position for 4-8 weeks. Coloradans who returned to work between May 16 and May 29 and maintain employment for at least eight weeks are eligible for a \$1,600 payment. Claimants who return to work between May 30 and June 26 and maintain at least eight weeks of employment are eligible for a \$1,200 incentive.

We urge Maryland to follow Colorado's lead and enact a similar program that incentivizes returning to work without creating unbearable hardship on those who have still been left behind by the pandemic economy. The issue on the table is not whether or not we should be doing everything in our power to help Marylanders get back to work safely, it's about how we as leaders in Maryland can create as safe, predictable, and balanced approach possible to maintain the prospects of a genuine and sustainable post-COVID-19 recovery.

The good news is that your decision is not final until July 3, and there is still time to take a measured, strategic approach that reinstates work search requirements, encourages individuals to gain employment, and ensures Marylanders still struggling do not lose their one and only lifeline.

Solving problems requires more than buying into partisan narratives that ignore the very real plight of countless Marylanders facing complex futures. All of our offices, including yours, have been on the frontlines of serving constituents failed by a broken unemployment insurance system since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over a year ago, the Senate of Maryland heard from hundreds of our State's residents who had

been left behind by a failed system. We continue to assist thousands of constituents who, unfortunately, remain in dire straits as rightful benefits are on hold or denied or stuck in limbo. Truly serving Marylanders means solving problems today that expand opportunity tomorrow. Maryland's current unemployment insurance plan and the potential rejection of federal support dollars do the opposite.

There is room for a solution that benefits all Marylanders - workers and employers, alike - so long as all parties in government work together to solve these real problems and leave politics aside for the betterment of our State. In that light, we request that you and Secretary Robinson work to develop an alternative course of action in the next two weeks, in collaboration with legislative and business leaders to find a new path before it is too late. Should your Administration continue down this path without proper consideration for the negative impacts to Marylanders, our chamber will be forced to consider all other tools at our disposal to ensure our State's prosperity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Ferguson". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Bill Ferguson  
Senate President

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kathy Klausmeier". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Katherine A. Klausmeier  
Senate Chair  
Joint Committee on Unemployment Insurance Oversight