



Media Release

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Rep. Shankland and Democratic Legislators Announce Bill Package to Expand Access to Unemployment Insurance Benefits

MADISON — Today, Rep. Shankland and Wisconsin Democratic legislators announced a package of eight bills to expand access to unemployment insurance (UI) benefits for Wisconsinites and strengthen the system to ensure economic stability and progress during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Rep. Katrina Shankland (D- Stevens Point) is the lead author introducing **LRB 6257**, legislation to repeal the one-week waiting period for UI benefit payments and **LRB 6249**, legislation to broaden eligibility for UI benefits by temporarily suspending the \$500 weekly wage threshold for recipients. Currently, claimants are ineligible for UI during weeks where they reach a wage or hour threshold.

She is also a coauthor of the other six bills in the legislative package:

- **LRB 6244:** Allowing Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) recipients to receive concurrent unemployment insurance benefits;
- **LRB 6246:** Reinstating the ability of those participating in extended occupational training to receive extended UI benefits;
- **LRB 6254:** Providing the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) the authority to determine by administrative rule what constitutes suitable work a claimant must accept if offered, and what labor market conditions to review based on the number of weeks that the claimant has received benefits;
- **LRB 6256:** Expanding DWD's authority to promulgate rules that provider waivers for work search and job registration requirements;
- **LRB 6265:** Reducing the work search requirement from four to two per week and repealing the provision allowing DWD to require additional work searches; and
- **LRB 6362:** Eliminating the concept of substantial fault from being a disqualifying factor.

Rep. Shankland issued the following statement about the package:

"Wisconsin families are struggling with the challenges of being out of work due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and they deserve our help and support. Our state's unemployment programs have been inundated by millions of claims, and there are still many people who need urgent assistance."

"I empathize with the significant hardship, stress, and frustration that folks are experiencing as they wait for their claims to come through, and as legislators, we must do everything in our power to support them. By passing these bills, we would make it easier to apply for unemployment insurance and help people access their benefits quicker. This legislative package removes barriers to applying for unemployment insurance, expands eligibility, and allows the Department of Workforce Development to process claims faster. If we passed these bills immediately, more people would receive the benefits they deserve as expediently as possible.

"There is no time to waste. I urge my colleagues to take up these proactive solutions as soon as possible. As the ranking member of the Assembly Committee on Workforce Development, I look forward to having a thoughtful conversation about unemployment insurance reform in the Legislature. We took a strong step forward together by passing COVID-19 relief legislation in April, and people are counting on us to do it again."