



MELISSA AGARD  
STATE SENATOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Senator Agard Votes to Start Modernization of the Unemployment System**

*The State Senate met to take first steps to upgrade the unemployment system shortcomings after nearly a year of issues.*

MADISON - Today, the Wisconsin State Senate met in a special session to take up legislation to address the backlog of claims with the Department of Workforce Development and the unemployment insurance system.

Senator Melissa Agard (D-Madison) released the following statement following the session:

“Too many people are hurting because they are out of work through no fault of their own due to COVID-19. They’ve been hurting for almost a year. It is disappointing that my Republican colleagues have done almost nothing to fix the issues related to our unemployment insurance technology infrastructure. Instead, they continued their pattern of the last 10 years - using unemployment as a partisan wedge to demonize those who need a helping hand.

“I am glad that today, we are finally voting on bipartisan action to address the fundamental shortcomings of our outdated UI system. These improvements will benefit Wisconsinites across the state who have struggled to get the help they need. The sad fact is, this should have been handled months ago - and Republicans refused to act.

“Every legislator in this building has received contacts regarding the issues with our unemployment system. This should have been a top priority the instant that these issues started to arise. But rather than address it, Republicans chose to ignore their constituents asking for help and blame the governor for something they ignored for nearly a decade. Governor Evers was not the governor when the Republican-controlled legislature passed the one-week waiting period or any bills that further restricted who could and could not access unemployment benefits and helped put us in this situation.

“It’s great that we have finally met to begin to address the issues that were created years ago with bad policy decisions. I hope that we can continue to meet and address the barriers that were unnecessarily created to prohibit our friends and neighbors from accessing the benefits they need to survive during this pandemic. I’m grateful it happened, but disappointed and frustrated it took this long. Wisconsin deserves so much better than this.”

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