



## Unemployment Bridge Program (S3192 / A4821) Labor Letter of Support

**March 10, 2023**

Dear Governor Hochul, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Speaker Heastie,

We write to you as leaders of labor unions collectively representing hundreds of thousands of members across New York in support of state legislation (A.4821/ S.3192) sponsored by Senator Jessica Ramos and Assembly Member Karines Reyes that would establish the Unemployment Bridge Program, a new program to provide workers who have been excluded from unemployment insurance with access to compensation when they lose work.

The program would be life-changing for more than 750,000 New Yorkers who are shut out from traditional unemployment support, including freelance workers, self-employed workers, and those who are not eligible for UI because of their immigration status or for serving time.

Unemployment insurance is not a benefit or a handout. It is an essential labor right that keeps workers safe on the job and empowers workers to hold bad employers accountable for labor violations, harassment, wage theft, and more. That was the reasoning behind the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935, which originally established our nation's unemployment insurance system. The law was passed during the height of the Great Depression, which put workers out of work in unprecedented numbers - much like the pandemic - forcing many into jobs where they could face exploitation and abuse. For the first time in U.S. history, the law gave workers the tools to leave exploitative workplaces without worrying they would lose everything if they did.

Yet even the 1935 law, while groundbreaking for its time, left nearly half of workers in the U.S. economy without any protections, primarily Black, brown and immigrant workers in precarious, low-wage industries like agricultural work and domestic work.

Nearly a century later, these discriminatory exclusions are still with us. The workers unable to access unemployment insurance are disproportionately people of color, women, immigrants, and low-income workers. The Immigration Research Initiative has estimated that 73% of the workers eligible for the Unemployment Bridge Program would be workers of color, and 22% are Black.

It's time to close these exclusions once and for all. Not only would it be good for excluded workers themselves, but it would also be good for the health and safety of all workers. When we deny excluded workers the right to call out labor violations in the workplace, we let bad actors drag down labor standards for all of us.

The Unemployment Bridge Program is especially important as the financialization of our economy upends the structure of work. As Wall Street and private equity firms force more and more companies to squeeze costs, companies are increasingly turning to contract and temporary work to replace full-time jobs. As a result, a growing number of workers are getting shut out from essential labor rights and protections - and the number will only grow in coming years.

It's time to update our safety net for the 21st century. We are calling on you to support the Unemployment Bridge Program and to make sure that all workers in New York can access essential labor protections on the job, no matter where they're from or what kind of work they do.

**Signed,**

AFSCME District Council 37

Construction & General Building Laborers' Local 79

Communication Workers of America Local 1109

District Council 9 NY, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades

National Writers Union

New York State Nurses Association

New York Taxi Workers Alliance

RWDSU/UFCW Local 338

Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union

Teamsters Joint Council 16

Teamsters Joint Council 18

UAW Region 9A

UFCW International Union, Region 1

United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 888

**For questions about this memorandum of support, please  
contact Fund Excluded Workers Campaign Manager  
Nishat Tabassum ([nishat.tabassum@maketheroadny.org](mailto:nishat.tabassum@maketheroadny.org)).**

