

# CONGRESS MUST EXTEND EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE NOW

At the end of July, tens of millions of families will lose \$600 a week they are relying on to make ends meet during this unprecedented economic and public health crisis. If Congress lets the emergency Unemployment Insurance boost from the CARES Act expire 30 million families will lose essential support at a desperate time. Congress must extend the enhanced Unemployment Insurance because: **Unemployment Insurance is keeping the economy afloat. Cutting Unemployment Insurance is an attack on Black and brown workers. Unemployment Insurance is saving lives.**

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

### ◆ UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE IS KEEPING THE ECONOMY AFLOAT.

- ◆ We are the economy. The economy is workers, families, and communities paying their bills, buying goods and services, and caring for their families—and it's only afloat right now because millions of Americans who have lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic are receiving Unemployment Insurance.
- ◆ Drastically cutting incomes for millions of people—who will then have less to spend at grocery stores, restaurants, and other businesses—will catalyze a second wave of layoffs and spell more economic hardship for millions of families. In fact, slashing UI alone will cost us another 5.1 million jobs over the next year.
- ◆ If conservatives end this UI program, millions of people will suffer. And with continued Depression-era levels of unemployment, COVID-19 cases rising in many states as millions of unemployed workers have lost or are about to lose their health insurance, and eviction moratoriums ending while a third of families are already struggling to pay rent, the worst is yet to come.

### ◆ CUTTING UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE IS AN ATTACK ON BLACK AND BROWN PEOPLE.

- ◆ Despite conservative claims that the labor market is bouncing back, Black and Asian unemployment is actually rising—in fact, more than half of Black adults are currently unemployed. Cutting UI when vulnerable workers continue to be laid off at alarming rates is cruel and bad for the economy.
- ◆ Expanded UI significantly lowered poverty rates for Black and brown people—cutting it off will shove them back below the poverty line, compounding housing and food insecurity already threatening these families.
- ◆ Black and brown workers are facing hardships on every front: they are more likely to be in essential roles and less likely to be able to work from home than white people. They are also facing higher unemployment rates than white workers. And they're concentrated in states that have stingy UI—meaning the \$600/week cut conservatives are threatening will hit them hardest when they can least afford it.

### ◆ UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE IS SAVING LIVES.

- ◆ Our first priority in a global pandemic needs to be peoples' health. Extending UI is a public health issue, which must continue to be a priority in the middle of a pandemic and as cases are surging in many places around the country.
- ◆ Unemployment Insurance helps keep families and the economy from financial collapse while it's still dangerous to send people back to work and reopen businesses.
- ◆ Conservatives are putting profits over people, rushing to reopen before we have stabilized the public health crisis, endangering everyone, but especially workers of color and women who are disproportionately concentrated in essential jobs. And rushing to reopen is catalyzing new waves of rising cases in many states, which may lead to additional stay-at-home orders and even more workers needing UI.

## MESSAGES ON THE \$600 BOOST TO UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

- ◆ **Cutting 30 million people's income by \$600 a week in the middle of a pandemic, with the unemployment rate in the double digits, would be an economic and moral calamity.**
- ◆ Conservatives are pretending like this crisis is over now that Wall Street and big business got their bailouts, but if we let workers and families fall through the cracks then this economic recession will be far longer and deeper than it needs to be.

- ◆ UI must be extended for as long as this crisis lasts. Slashing UI benefits by more than half, since in many states UI without this emergency boost will recover only a fraction of a worker's lost wages, will compound suffering for millions of families who need this support to survive the public health and economic crises.
- ◆ **Maintaining emergency unemployment benefits is critical for making sure that Black and brown workers aren't further exploited during this crisis.** Decades of systemic racism have pushed Black and brown workers into the least secure jobs. Now Black and brown workers are bearing the brunt of this crisis: they are overrepresented among "essential" frontline workers risking their lives and health on the job, they are among the last to be rehired when they get laid off, and they have the smallest financial cushions to help weather the storm.
- ◆ **The public is with us, across the board.** A [recent MorningConsult poll showed that 75% of registered voters](#) support either maintaining or raising the unemployment insurance benefits (and 67% of Republican respondents said the same). Conservatives in power who want to slash these supports will be responsible for real suffering when the benefits run out, and the people know it.

## PUSHING BACK AGAINST OPPONENTS

- ◆ **When they say "When UI payments are this high, it will disincentivize people from going back to work," WE SAY:**
  - \* This just isn't true. [Evidence shows that](#) recipients of UI more intensely search for work and have better job search outcomes. [This [piece from Slate](#) collects some of the best evidence that this argument isn't true.]
  - \* Forcing people back to work during a pandemic before it's safe—or forcing them to choose between their health and their ability to put food on the table—will not make our economy healthier or more resilient.
  - \* And after solving the public health crisis, politicians who want workers to return to work must address [the crisis of child care](#) facing millions of families before working parents can get back to work.
  - \* Responsible employers will have no trouble bringing people back to work. Despite what conservatives claim, everyone wants stable employment, health insurance, and benefits. Conservatives shouldn't do the bidding of employers who want to get away with low pay and refuse to protect workers or act in the interest of public health.
  - \* Conservatives are trying to bring back tired old racist tropes to block a common-sense policy and we can't let them get away with it. Expanded emergency UI helps everyone - Black, white, and brown - as well as the overall economy.
- ◆ **When they say "the economy is reopening and everything is fine," WE SAY:**
  - \* The so-called "reopening" in several states—flying in the face of the advice of public health and economic experts—is part of the conservative agenda to deliberately cut off workers from the lifelines that are keeping them and the overall economy afloat. They are willing to force people back to work and sacrifice their lives to keep the stock market up.
  - \* Re-opening before we have the virus under control puts us all at risk. We're seeing a surge in cases right now, and many states that have started to "reopen" are pulling back on the advice of public health experts. Emergency benefits should continue as long as this crisis does.
  - \* The expiration of this benefit is also bumping up against the date on which the federal eviction moratorium expires, which has prevented millions of people from being evicted. Food insecurity, eviction, and a huge pay cut all coinciding at the end of July will be an unmitigated catastrophe for tens of millions of families and for the economy overall.
- ◆ **When they say "\$600 is too much," WE SAY:**
  - \* This is nonsense. Cutting these emergency funds by any amount prevents millions of people from being able to pay their bills, feed their families, and keep a roof over their heads. Reducing paychecks by even a cent right now would spell disaster for families and the economy.
  - \* Our federal government has also lavished large corporations with [hundreds of billions of dollars doled out by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin](#) with almost no transparency or oversight around where the money has gone. We know it isn't showing up in working people's paychecks. Why are we quibbling over giving workers and families a small sustainable amount to ensure some basic quality of life?