



The Honorable Charles Schumer
United States Senate Majority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

September 17, 2021

Dear Majority Leader Schumer:

Thank you for your continued efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and your work to protect New Yorkers from the virus. Earlier this year as vaccine rollouts were underway, many of us were hopeful for a full and timely return to workplace normalcy this year. The unfortunate reality is that our communities are still struggling and the end of expanded pandemic unemployment benefits came at a perilous time. One thing is abundantly clear — for those who have experienced the most hardship and loss during COVID-19, this pandemic is far from over. We are gravely concerned about the end of the **Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), and request that the federal government provide additional funds to states who wish to continue those programs. Moreover, we request additional federal funding or forgiveness to cover some of New Yorks' unemployment debt.**

An estimated 7.5 million Americans lost their full benefits or supplemental benefits with the expiration of these programs, including 1.2 million New Yorkers. As of September 6th, 745,548 New Yorkers were receiving PUA. These New Yorkers have been left without any support. An additional 474,402 New Yorkers were receiving FPUC and have lost vital supplemental funds they received each week.¹

¹<https://tcf.org/content/report/7-5-million-workers-face-devastating-unemployment-benefits-cliff-labor-day/?agreed=1&agreed=1>

Although unemployment rates are down relative to the beginning of the pandemic, many remain out of work and future job growth is imperiled by the Delta variant. New York State has had an unemployment rate of 7.7% since July 2021, which is significantly higher than the national average of 5.4%. New York City's rate remains even higher at 10.2%. Some have argued that extending unemployment benefits will further delay people's return to the workforce. Yet, there is no evidence that ending these pandemic benefits will incentivize people to return to work.² Instead, millions of families will be left without the support they have been relying on to survive.

Furthermore, the impact of the unemployment crisis has hit American workers unevenly, with certain racial, socioeconomic and gender groups impacted more than others. Workers of color continue to bear the brunt of the COVID-19 labor market crisis. The current national unemployment rate for Black workers is 9.2%—a rate that would likely be declared a national emergency if it were impacting the entire population. Additionally, there are still 1.79 million women who have been forced out of their jobs as a result of the ongoing effects of the pandemic. Notably, because most were not laid off, these workers who are not eligible for traditional state unemployment have been utilizing federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). Now with the suspension of PUA, these individuals will have no support.³

Although the federal government urged states with high unemployment rates to continue issuing expanded unemployment benefits, New York is legally unable to allocate funds due to our deficit.⁴ As of September 2nd, New York State owes \$9 billion in outstanding unemployment debt to the federal government. State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli has estimated that New York's unemployment taxes on employers may increase by 30.5% compared to 2020, and may increase by as much as 45% by 2025 in order to pay the debt and interest. New York has only been able to repay \$1 billion of its debt accrued during the pandemic, thus far.⁵ Without additional funding from the federal government or debt forgiveness, New York's debt may place an undue burden on businesses and stifle our economic recovery. Moreover, it makes it impossible for New York to consider continuing lapsed federal pandemic unemployment programs without federal support.

We are working to ensure that supporting the unemployed and getting New Yorkers back to work is a priority of the state under Governor Hochul's new Executive administration. But New York State cannot shoulder the cost alone. The price of covering these programs is prohibitive for states like New York with high unemployment and communities still in dire need for relief due to the ongoing pandemic. We urge the federal government to extend funding for these vital programs PUA, PEUC, and FPUC as our communities continue to recover from the pandemic.

² <https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/23/ending-unemployment-benefits-had-little-impact-on-jobs-study-says.html>

³ <https://tcf.org/content/report/7-5-million-workers-face-devastating-unemployment-benefits-cliff-labor-day/>

⁴ <https://www.wgrz.com/article/news/local/ny-wont-extend-federal-unemployment-benefit-programs-citing-budget-deficit-of-11-billion/71-7326a404-23f5-4d39-a331-e855a4857365>

⁵ <https://www.thecity.nyc/2021/9/9/22664536/hochul-taxes-budget-cuomo-unemployment-insurance>

With Gratitude,



Alessandra Biaggi
New York State Senator, District 34



Yuh-Line Niou
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Brad Hoylman, New York State Senator, District 27
Robert Jackson, New York State Senator, District 31
Liz Krueger, New York State Senator, District 28
Rachel May, New York State Senator, District 53
Jessica Ramos, New York State Senator, District 13
Gustavo Rivera, New York State Senator, District 33
Sean Ryan, New York State Senator, District 60
Julia Salazar, New York State Senator, District 18
Jose Serrano, New York State Senator, District 29
Charles Barron, New York State Assembly Member, District 60
Chris Burdick, New York State Assembly Member, District 93
Maritza Davila, New York State Assembly Member, District 53
Carmen De La Rosa, New York State Assembly Member, District 72
Steve Englebright, New York State Assembly Member, District 4
Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas, New York State Assembly Member, District 34
Andrew Hevesi, New York State Assembly Member, District 28
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Karines Reyes, New York State Assembly Member, District 87
Linda Rosenthal, New York State Assembly Member, District 67
Nily Rozic, New York State Assembly Member, District 25
Rebecca Seawright, New York State Assembly Member, District 76
Jo Anne Simon, New York State Assembly Member, District 52
David Weprin, New York State Assembly Member, District 24
Catalina Cruz, New York State Assembly Member, District 39
Emily Gallagher, New York State Assembly Member, District 50
Deborah Glick, New York State Assembly Member, District 66
Michaëlle Solages, New York State Assembly Member, District 22
Khaleel Anderson, New York State Assembly Member, District 31
Patricia Fahy, New York State Assembly Member, District 109
Nathalia Fernandez, New York State Assembly Member, District 80

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Richard Gottfried, New York State Assembly Member, District 75
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Marcela Mitaynes, New York State Assembly Member, District 51
Gary Pretlow, New York State Assembly Member, District 89
Robert Rodriguez, New York State Assembly Member, District 68
Al Taylor, New York State Assembly Member, District 71

CC: US Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
CC: US Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh
CC: New York State Governor Kathy Hochul
CC: New York Congressional Delegation