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**SENATOR JANET BEWLEY**  
**WISCONSIN STATE SENATE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Legislative Democrats Introduce Bill Package to Remove Barriers to Unemployment Insurance**

MADISON - Today, Legislative Democrats introduced a package of bills aimed at removing hurdles and expediting the Unemployment Insurance process for Wisconsinites. Since March, the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) has witnessed an unprecedented number of unemployment claims due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The legislation introduced today would eliminate hurdles people are facing in receiving their UI benefits. Over the past eight years, Republican majorities enacted unnecessary barriers regarding UI that are slowing down the process during the current crisis. Senate Democratic leader Senator Janet Bewley (D-Mason) released the following statement:

“This pandemic is revealing that the challenges within the Wisconsin unemployment system are the direct result of the Walker Administration’s efforts to make collecting unemployment benefits harder. In Madison or Milwaukee, or closer to my home in Ashland or Rice Lake, people are suffering because the Republicans who control the legislature aren’t doing anything. Democrats want to take meaningful, comprehensive and corrective action to help Wisconsin residents. These bills take critical steps to remove unnecessary and punitive barriers.”

The package of bills include the following proposals:

LRB 6244 - Wisconsin is one of only two states that prevent people with disabilities who are able to work from receiving unemployment benefits. This bill would allow social security disability (SSDI) recipients to receive concurrent unemployment insurance benefits.

LRB 6246 -Under current law, individuals cannot receive extended UI benefits when participating in extended occupational training. This bill would reinstate the ability of those participating in extended occupational training to receive extended UI benefits.

LRB 6249 - Currently, claimants are ineligible for UI during weeks where they hit a wage threshold. This bill would temporarily suspend the \$500 wage threshold for recipients of unemployment insurance benefits.

LRB 6254 - The current definition of “suitable work” creates challenges for claimants. This bill reinstates DWD’s 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 - Several laws enacted over the last decade have restricted DWD’s ability to increase access to unemployment insurance when appropriate. This bill expands DWD’s authority to promulgate rules that provide waivers for work search and job registration requirements.

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**25th Senate District**

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LRB 6257 - Currently, payments on valid unemployment insurance claims are delayed for one week. This bill would permanently eliminate the requirement that claimants wait one week before receiving benefits.

LRB 6265 - Currently, claimants are required to perform four work searches per week. This bill lowers the required work searches from four to two per week and repeals the provision allowing DWD to require by rule additional work searches.

LRB 6362 - The concept of substantial fault has caused confusion for both employers and employees and when employees are entitled to benefits when they are discharged by their employers. This bill would eliminate the concept of substantial fault being a disqualifying factor.

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