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REPLY TO:

TO: All Senators
FROM: Senator Christine M. Tartaglione
DATE: April 14, 2011
SUBJECT: Co-sponsorship Memo – Extended Unemployment Benefits

In the near future, I plan to introduce legislation which will amend Section 401-A (b) and (c) of the Unemployment Compensation (UC) Law, corresponding to PL 111-312 Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization and Job Creation Act of 2010.

The purpose of this legislation is to ensure the long-term unemployed residents of this Commonwealth continue to receive extended UC benefits for the remainder of 2011. Currently, Pennsylvania's eligibility for extended UC benefits is scheduled to end in July 2011. This will result in nearly 60,000 Pennsylvanians losing 20 weeks of federally funded UC benefits.

According to Pennsylvania's UC Law, federal subsidies for UC benefits are triggered "on" or "off" by the state's present unemployment rate, as measured against the same month during the previous two years, called the look-back period. Similar to Act 30, passed by the General Assembly during the 2009-2010 Legislative Session, my proposed legislation will provide a technical amendment to the current UC Law, increasing the Commonwealth's look-back period from two to three years. This will maintain federal funding for extended benefits through 2011.

During the current economic climate, many individuals have been forced to rely upon UC benefits to support themselves and their families; thus, it is critical that the state take action to continue providing extended UC benefits to its citizenry. Failure to pass legislation which increases Pennsylvania's look-back period by July 2011 will halt extended benefits for a minimum of 13 weeks. This is a risk which the Commonwealth cannot afford.

Other states that have already signed technical amendments to their UC Laws include California, Colorado, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina and Washington. New Jersey has passed legislation, but is awaiting the Governor's signature.

If you would like to co-sponsor this legislation, please contact Sherry Hess via phone at (717)787-1141 or via email at shess@pasenate.com.