

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 16, 2021
TO: All House Members
FROM: Representative Austin Davis
SUBJECT: Reinstating PUA for Vulnerable Pennsylvanians

Over the past month, the number of new claims filed for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) has dwindled from over 5,000 to zero. Unfortunately, these claims did not dramatically drop because vulnerable Pennsylvanians stopped needing help; they just stopped receiving it.

Throughout the pandemic, PUA has been a critical lifeline for workers that are historically excluded from traditional unemployment compensation, such as gig workers, recent college graduates, contract workers, and the self-employed. Low-wage, Black, Latino, female, and immigrant workers are also more likely to be part of this excluded workforce and are now left with little support amid the Delta variant surge, a new school year, and an unemployment rate that remains well above pre-pandemic levels.

While the federal government has ceased funding this crucial program directly, the state legislature can and must step in. As such, I will be introducing legislation to utilize unspent American Rescue Plan dollars to fully fund the PUA program through the end of the year.

Please join me in reinstating this safety net for vulnerable Pennsylvanians that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, and ensure they have the help they need as they work to acquire well-paid, life-sustaining employment.

Thank you for your consideration.