

[Date]

Governor of New York  
Honorable David A. Paterson  
State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Paterson:

Job losses are cascading in New York State – and the unemployment rolls have surged to over 760,000 New Yorkers. Now more than ever, working families are depending on unemployment insurance benefits to meet their basic needs and prevent their families from falling into poverty. The current economy demands immediate action to strengthen the jobless safety net. We call on you to support the following changes to New York's UI system:

- **Increased maximum benefit amounts that will provide meaningful income support for working families.** The maximum weekly benefit New Yorkers can receive is \$405, which has remained unchanged since 2000 and replaces a smaller share of wages than 49 of the 50 states. We call for higher maximum benefits that will gradually replace at least half of a worker's average wage. Proposed legislation will bring the maximum benefit to \$475 this year, and gradually increase it until 2013, when it will be indexed to one-half the average weekly wage.
- **Do more for low-wage workers:** A single mother with two kids laid off from a job earning \$8 per hour laid off only receives \$160 per week compared to \$213 per week in New Jersey. New York should address this disparity by raising the level of benefits for workers who don't qualify for the maximum by both increasing the minimum benefit and changing the formula for calculating the weekly amount. Moreover, some low-wage hourly educational workers and underpaid adjunct professors can't even get UI when they are laid off – and now is the time to end this exclusion.
- **Increased sustainability of the UI Trust Fund.** As of early January 2009, a depleted UI Trust Fund forced New York to borrow federal funds in order to continue paying benefits. One major cause of this problem is that the amount of a worker's earnings on which an employer pays taxes has been stuck at just \$8,500 for a decade. We call for a taxable wage base that is indexed to inflation so that contributions rise with wages and funding is sustainable.

UI benefits will not only help working families meet daily needs, such as food and housing costs, but will also benefit local economies as unemployment circulate in the economy and buoy local businesses. Putting a better UI system in place will help all of us in New York withstand and recover from this recession.

Thank you for your support of working families.

Respectfully,

[name]  
[organization]

cc:

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