

**PROMOTING FAIRNESS IN UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE  
FOR WORKERS SEEKING PART-TIME WORK.**

**Lead Sponsors: Senator Pacheco, Representative Marzilli SB 1089/ HB 1818  
Committee: Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development**

**The Problem: Individuals who separate from a full-time job are denied unemployment benefits if they must look for part-time work in order to care for a family member.**

**Examples:** “Jane Doe” quit her full time job as a home health aide because of domestic violence by her husband. She is now safe enough to look for work but must limit her search to part-time, evening work because that is when her mother can watch her two children. She wants to work full-time but is waiting for affordable child care slots to open up.

“Emma Smith” was laid off from her job as a bank teller. Shortly after her layoff her mother passed away, leaving her to care for her ailing father. She found a home health aide available for 5 hours a day and decided to provide the balance of care herself. Consequently, she is now searching for a part-time job.

Under the Division of Unemployment Assistance (DUA’s) current legal interpretation and practice, both workers are disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance solely because their prior jobs were full-time jobs.

**The Solution:** Extend eligibility for unemployment benefits to workers who need to look for part-time work because of family caretaking responsibilities.

**Why Now? This legislation is timely because:**

- The federal Reed Act which resulted in the 2004 distribution of an additional \$194 million into the Massachusetts unemployment trust fund encouraged the use of these funds for individuals who are available only for part-time work.
- The federal Department of Labor recently promulgated regulations clearly authorizing the states to include unemployment insurance eligibility for workers seeking part time work.
- The unemployment agency has determined that this change would have a very small impact on the Massachusetts unemployment trust fund.
- There is a growing recognition that families should be assisted in balancing work and family needs.
- This law would make the unemployment system more responsive to the needs of women in the workforce, as women still bear a disproportionate burden of providing family care for children and elders.
- Expanding unemployment eligibility boosts and stabilizes the economy, as each dollar of unemployment insurance contributes \$2.15 to the country’s GDP.

For further information, please contact Monica Halas, Greater Boston Legal Services, 617/603-1666, [mhalas@gbls.org](mailto:mhalas@gbls.org), or Margaret Monsell, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, 617/357-0700, ext. 304, [mmonsell@mlri.org](mailto:mmonsell@mlri.org).