

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Department of Employment Services**



Public Hearing on

“B23-985, the Unemployment Benefits Extension Amendment Act of 2020”

**Written Testimony of
Dr. Unique Morris-Hughes
Director**

**Before the
Committee on Labor and Workforce Development
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Elissa Silverman, Chairperson**

November 16, 2020
3:00 PM
Virtual Meeting Platform
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004



The Department of Employment Services (DOES) submits the following written statement for the record for the public hearing on B23-985, the “Unemployment Benefits Extension Amendment Act of 2020.” The purpose of this legislation is to provide eligible District claimants with an additional seven weeks of federally-funded unemployment or federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits. DOES has worked closely with Councilmember Silverman, the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development, and the United States Department of Labor (DOL) to ensure that the language in this bill complies with federal laws and regulations.

Based on our research, and in consultation with DOL on this proposed legislation, permanent legislation is not required at this time to provide District residents with the additional extended weeks of unemployment or PUA benefits, since the temporary version of this legislation would be in effect for the duration of the current federal funding for these benefits. However, there is consensus that permanent legislation is advisable. DOES recommends moving forward with this permanent legislation to ensure that any future federally-funded weeks of extended benefits are available to District claimants.

The sections of the D.C. Code amended by this proposed legislation were initially drafted in 2009 in response to the Great Recession. Today, the Council and DOES are amending them to respond to the unprecedented COVID-19 public health emergency. The COVID-19 related stimulus funding in both the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, & Economic Security (CARES) Act and Families First Coronavirus Response (Families First) Act are both set to expire at the end of the calendar year. However, the current public health emergency and corresponding economic emergency are far from over. The District government fervently hopes for additional economic stimulus legislation. If such necessary legislation is passed, Mayor Muriel Bowser and DOES are

committed to ensuring that District residents and claimants are poised to take advantage of every possible benefit.

The language in this bill would allow District claimants to take advantage of extended benefits, so long as “100% federal sharing is available under section 4105 of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, approved March 18, 2020 (Pub. L. No. 116-127; 134 Stat. 195) (“Families First Act”), *or any subsequent amendment to the Families First Act, or other federal law.*” (Emphasis Added). DOES strongly believes that this language may be necessary in the future, either in response to the current public health emergency or as part of a future economic response to an unforeseen event.

We urge the Council to pass this legislation and look forward to our continued work with the Committee to ensure District claimants are receiving the maximum amount of benefits possible during this pandemic.