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**D.C. Council Labor Committee Approves Transformative Budget to Boost Unemployed Workers, Small Businesses, and Paid Medical Leave Benefits**

***Recommendations Put Thousands of Dollars in the Pockets of DC Unemployed Residents, Award Grants to Struggling Local Businesses, and Increase Paid Medical Leave to 6 Weeks***

***WASHINGTON, D.C., July 1, 2021*** –The D.C. Council’s Committee on Labor and Workforce Development, chaired by Councilmember Elissa Silverman (I-At-Large), yesterday unanimously approved its Fiscal Year 2022 committee budget recommendations, which make significant investments in District residents and businesses most impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. The Committee proposes more than $90 million in direct assistance to DC residents who lost employment and income due to COVID-19, and $30 million in direct grants to local businesses to help pay back rent and get workers back on payroll. The Committee’s recommendations also triple paid medical leave benefits for workers, increasing the number of weeks available from two to six.

“This is a pivotal time for our city, and it is also one of opportunity,” said Silverman. “As the District recovers from the pandemic, my guiding principle is to direct resources strategically to help those most impacted by COVID-19, strengthen our economy, and build a workforce pipeline in our high-demand industries so that D.C. residents will get hired in living-wage careers that create a more equitable District of Columbia.”

In order to build this workforce development infrastructure, the Committee recommends investing heavily in healthcare and information technology training both through the University of the District of Columbia, UDC’s community college, and community-based providers with a track record of success. The committee also will continue to invest in young people with the Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and a newly permanent school-year paid internship program for D.C. high school students.

The report recommends the following investments:

* **$35 million** for DC workers who lost income and were excluded from federal unemployment compensation benefits (combines $15 million from mayor’s proposal and additional $20 million from committee)
* **$29 million** to permanently make unemployment insurance (UI) exempt from D.C. income tax
* **$15 million** for payments to D.C. residents who endured extraordinarily long wait times before receiving their unemployment benefits
* **$5 million** for incentive payments to unemployed District residents to complete STAY DC rental assistance applications
* **$5 million** for Heroes Pay for thousands of D.C. workers in essential jobs
* **$30 million** in targeted grants to small, local, and minority owned businesses in the restaurant, retail, and hospitality sector which experienced significant revenue loss
* **$98 million** to expand Universal Paid Leave medical benefits from 2 weeks to 6 weeks for one year, with a path for permanently expanding the program and adjusting tax rate
* **$12 million** to boost both IT and health care training, through investments in UDC and community-based organizations, with a focus on nursing and long-term care
* **$1.5 million** to create a new eviction diversion program, so workers struggling with rent do not experience the trauma of eviction
* **$23 million** to grow SYEP and create a new year-round paid high school internship program
* **$1 million** over two years for an innovative Jobs First pilot to put returning citizens and residents experiencing housing instability into full-time, permanent employment

For a full list of the Labor Committee’s recommendations and other information, click [here](https://www.elissasilverman.com/committeeonlabor).

“The influx of federal funds from the American Rescue Plan is an extraordinary chance to truly transform our economy,” said Silverman. “We need to leverage these dollars to make once-in-a-lifetime investments that will make our city more equitable and just.”

The recommendations now move to the full Council, which will take its first vote on the FY 2022 budget on July 20, 2021.

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