

Duckworth, Durbin, Rubio Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Fix Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Overpayment Issue for Working Families

December 17 2020 9:46 AM



WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Marco Rubio (R-FL) today introduced bipartisan legislation that would help fix an error that caused individuals receiving Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) to forcibly repay, while potentially unemployed, overpayments they received

unknowingly. The *Relief for Working Families Act* would provide states discretion to waive PUA overpayments for individuals who acted in good faith and played no role in securing surplus benefits. U.S. Representatives Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA-03) and Stephanie Murphy (D-FL-07) introduced companion legislation in the House.

“Hardworking Americans already struggling during this pandemic shouldn’t be forced to pay for a bureaucratic error they had nothing to do with,” Duckworth said. “I’m proud to introduce this legislation that will ensure working families don’t bear this additional burden of financial distress and states have the tools and flexibility they need to remedy this problem for thousands of Americans across the country.”

“No one should have to pay back thousands of dollars they thought they were getting in good faith. Our bill gives States flexibility to provide relief to families that are in need and fixes this error for countless Americans across the country,” Durbin said.

“American families are struggling with lost jobs, home schooling and more amid a global pandemic. The last thing working families need is to find out they owe money to their state because of a bureaucratic error—and the last thing states need is a lack of flexibility to do anything about it,” Rubio said. “This legislation would provide states with the same flexibility within the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program that they already have in other unemployment programs, and allow states to address cases where individuals might have been forced to repay unemployment overpayments that are not their fault.”

Under current law, state unemployment offices are not provided hardship waivers for PUA benefits, despite having such authority for the other major unemployment insurance programs included in the *CARES Act*. The new legislation introduced today would provide states the flexibility they need to handle PUA overpayments within their own state unemployment offices.