

2019 MAMAGENDA

Support family caregivers in our state's unemployment laws

Unemployment insurance is something a lot of us don't think about until we need it most. These benefits are a critical safety net for families who need a stop-gap between jobs. But our state's unemployment laws, like many of our laws, weren't written with family caregiving in mind and that has big consequences for working families, and too often, for working moms.

What's going on?

Under current law, you could be denied unemployment benefits in Washington if you quit your job to care for a family member. The state requires many workers to be "able and available" to work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in order to receive unemployment benefits – regardless of childcare or family care limitations. ^[1]

Just ten years ago, our nation fell into one of the worst economic disasters in history. Millions of families depended on unemployment insurance to help get them by. While the economy is in recovery today, another recession could always be around the corner, and it's critical that the laws overseeing our unemployment insurance system reflect the realities of today's working families, those realities include family caregiving.



What can we do about it?

We can update our unemployment insurance laws for the 21st century to make sure unemployment works for working families, including giving job seekers more flexibility in finding work that allows for appropriate childcare or eldercare arrangements.

We can look to 2018's HB 2987 sponsored by Rep. Mia Gregerson as a model to start from.

SOURCES: [1] Employment Security Department: Basic Eligibility Requirements
<https://esd.wa.gov/unemployment/basic-eligibility-requirements>