



THE GENERAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement from Senate President Karen E. Spilka, Speaker of the House Ronald Mariano, Senate Ways & Means Chair Michael J. Rodrigues and House Ways & Means Chair Aaron Michlewitz

“The Senate and House have reached agreement on a bill to help workers and employers jumpstart our nascent recovery as we begin to slowly emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. This agreement strikes a balance to ensure that businesses can continue to move forward while protecting those working hard to keep the economy going. Time is of the essence to bring this much needed relief to businesses and employees, and so we will act expeditiously to get this comprehensive bill to the Governor’s desk.

While businesses require our support to weather this economic storm, our employees need help too. We have agreed to provide targeted tax relief to unemployed workers whose income falls below 200 percent of the poverty line. We also recognize that many are navigating our Unemployment Insurance (UI) system for the first time, and so we have agreed to waive penalties for missed tax payments on UI benefits received in 2020.

To help protect employees on the front lines—and to help prevent the further spread of COVID-19—we are making sure all employees have access to paid leave if they are unable to work because they get infected with the coronavirus, are ordered to quarantine, or need to take time off to get the vaccine. In tandem with federal legislation, this state response will ensure employees have access to paid leave and employers are reimbursed for such costs. We believe this will provide a necessary and crucial safety net for the employees, especially essential workers, who have shown up every day to keep our economy and communities running throughout this public health crisis.

Finally, the bill will prevent increases in the UI rate schedule for 2021 and 2022, providing employers with needed stability and relief as the Commonwealth continues to recover. The agreement also allows for state borrowing, secured by a temporary employer assessment, to ensure the solvency of the UI trust fund. In addition to UI relief, to help many small businesses and employers who received PPP loans to stay afloat and save jobs, we have agreed to conform to the current federal tax code to exclude forgiven PPP loans from gross income for small businesses organized as pass-through entities.”

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