

March 11, 2021

Senator Michael Sirotkin, Chair

Senate Committee On Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs

Dear Members of the Committee;

The hospitality industry has suffered substantial losses and a disproportionate number of individuals collecting unemployment are within the leisure and hospitality sector. The Vermont hospitality industry is hopeful it will begin its road to recovery late spring/early summer. If S.10 is passed with an increase to the weekly maximum benefit amount, employers will be in for a harder climb up an already arduous mountain.

I understand the desire to help the unemployed. I appreciate the intent. I however ask that the committee further consider the incredible benefits just signed into law with the ARPA signed today by President Biden. \$1400 Stimulus checks, increased child tax credits of up to \$300/month per child that will begin in July, increased child care tax credits which are fully refundable, additional refunds for any 2020 tax filers now that \$10,200 of UI is non-taxable, tripled earned income tax credits from \$500 to \$1500, 15% increase in snap benefits; help is on the way. These benefits and so many more that I haven't listed will assist the unemployed until they can be vaccinated (approx. late June) if they so choose and then the barriers that led them to leave the workforce should be lifted. Then they can come back to work safely and be a part of our road to recovery.

As we look forward to getting back to business we know we are going to struggle finding staff. The imminent workforce issues will be our next challenge and increased UI benefits will create a competition that no employer within hospitality can afford.

I know that the legislature is aware of the hospitality industry's challenges during the pandemic and has been instrumental in its survival thus far. We have received grants that helped us until last September but Vermont imposed far stricter lockdown orders than other states and we have been unable to run profitable business since last March. Please do not create a large unnecessary obstacle. Especially amongst so much good news;

increased vaccine supply, warmer weather, and even tonight a commitment from President Biden that everyone will have access to the vaccine beginning May 1st and we should plan on celebrating July 4th together. I can't begin to tell you how devastating it will be if we find ourselves in July with lifted restrictions, having to turn away revenue because of a lack of workforce.

Employers have to replenish the UI trust fund. Increasing the weekly maximum benefit will only add to this burden. Employers are cutting costs at every possible turn, desperate to keep their doors open. Please don't increase expenses as soon as we begin to recover.

We're almost there, push us over the finish line, don't throw spikes in the road.

Talena Companion (Shannon)

VAWP Board Treasurer

802-274-1224

talenashannon@gmail.com

[Premier Entertainment & Events](#)

Patti Komline

Downs Rachlin Martin PLLC | Business Sense · Legal Ingenuity
52 State Street, PO Box 1072 | Montpelier, VT 05601-1072

Direct: 908-938-1616 | Main: 802-225-5500
pkomline@drm.com | www.drm.com