



International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 205 UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE MODERNIZATION ACT OF 2024 February 14, 2024

TO: Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby and members of the House Economic Matters Committee
FROM: Tom Clark, Political Director, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 26

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair and members of the House Economic Matters committee. John F. Kennedy once said, "The time to fix the roof, is when the sun is shining." Meaning, there is no sense in fixing the roof when it is raining. I think that saying it is appropriate now, when work is plentiful (Maryland has the lowest unemployment rate in the nation) why not address issues in the Unemployment Insurance system now, before the work picture declines and claims increase. For that reason, I ask that you join me in **support of HB 205**.

Maryland has not addressed or adjusted the unemployment insurance program in 21 years. Problems with the amount of benefits and how they are calculated came to light during the pandemic, when the UI was heavily used by so many Marylanders. Revisiting how benefits are calculated is a smart and prudent move, at this time, while work is plentiful. Unemployment benefits are received by individuals in need and are designed to bridge the gap from one job to the next. The benefits received now are below minimum wage and well below a living wage. By revisiting this issue now, we can help Maryland families, in between jobs. Not the few looking for a handout, but the many that are able and ready to work. Let us help those down on their luck by increasing the stipend of benefits that we all pay into, in this employee/employer insurance program.

Please give your **support and vote in favor of HB 205**. The sun is shining, it's time to fix the roof. Thank you.

