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TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley
Chair, Finance Committee

FROM: Hannibal G. Williams II Kemerer
Chief Counsel, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

RE: SB 893 – Unemployment Insurance – Revisions and Required Study – **Support**

The Office of Attorney General (the “OAG”) urges this Committee to favorably report SB 893, Senator Rosapepe’s legislation to legislation requiring the Department of Labor (DOL) to implement user-friendly unemployment insurance practices.

The Attorney General’s COVID-19 Access to Justice Task Force issued a report in January in which it recommended legislation like SB 893 to “improve transparency in the unemployment insurance application system.”¹ The report noted that such reforms “should include establishing a system that enables applicants to track the status of their Unemployment Insurance claims through application, processing, and review.”² Senate Bill 893 tracks this recommendation by, among other things, requiring DOL to “establish systems, processes, and procedures that enable an applicant to track the status of a claim, including the anticipated timeline for the resolution of each particular claim[.]”³

Similarly, the Task Force urged DOL to:

build on early success with the Maryland Easy Enrollment Health Insurance Program and connect unemployed individuals who have lost health insurance coverage to health insurance options offered by the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE). MDL should be directed to incorporate a health insurance

¹See generally MD. ATT’Y GEN. BRIAN E. FROSH’S COVID-19 ACCESS TO JUST. TASK FORCE, CONFRONTING THE COVID-19 ACCESS TO JUSTICE CRISIS 34 (Jan. 2021), https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/A2JC%20Documents1/AG_Covid_A2J_TF_Report.pdf.

² *Id.*

³ S.B. 893 at 3:21– 24, 2021 Leg., 422d Sess. (Md. 2021) (small caps omitted).

checkbox into applications for unemployment insurance, asking applicants whether they want information from their unemployment application shared with MHBE for follow up assistance in obtaining free or low-cost health insurance.⁴

Senate Bill 893 seeks to codify this requirement in Section 8-109(b)(1), which requires DOL to begin implementing a system through which an individual who has filed a claim for benefits may consent, as part of any weekly claim certification, to the sharing of relevant collected information by the [DOL] with the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and the Maryland Department of Health to determine whether the individual qualifies for free or low-cost health insurance and, if so, to help the individual enroll.⁵

In short, SB 893 seeks to implement these and other recommendations of the Attorney General's COVID-19 Access to Justice Task Force that are designed to benefit Marylanders seeking to obtain unemployment benefits and health insurance in the wake of job losses.

For all of the foregoing reasons, the Office of Attorney General urges a favorable report on SB 893.

cc: Members of the Finance Committee

⁴ MD. ATT'Y GEN. BRIAN E. FROSH'S COVID-19 ACCESS TO JUST. TASK FORCE, *supra* note 1, at 35–36.

⁵ S.B. 893 at 5:3– 10 (small caps omitted).