
SENATE BILL 6322

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2024 Regular Session

By Senators Cleveland and Braun

Read first time 03/07/24. Referred to Committee on Labor & Commerce.

1 AN ACT Relating to unemployment benefit delays; adding a new
2 section to chapter 50.20 RCW; creating a new section; and providing
3 an expiration date.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The employment security department
6 shall conduct a comprehensive study to examine the link between
7 delays in receiving unemployment benefits and homelessness.

8 (2)(a) The study must include the evaluation of relevant
9 unemployment benefit timeliness factors such as:

10 (i) Annual average call wait times for claimants to reach an
11 agent since 2019;

12 (ii) Average call abandonment statistics since 2019;

13 (iii) Average backlog of unemployment claims since 2019;

14 (iv) First payment timeliness statistics since 2019;

15 (v) Nonmonetary determination timeliness statistics since 2019;

16 and

17 (vi) Average high call volume message output since 2019.

18 (b) Based on the study findings, the employment security
19 department shall propose actionable recommendations to reduce benefit
20 wait times. Recommendations may include process improvements,
21 resource allocation, and technology upgrades.

1 (3) The employment security department shall analyze data
2 collected under section 2(3) of this act regarding claimants' housing
3 security status and how many times the department connected claimants
4 to services to determine the impact of benefit delays on housing
5 stability. The analysis must:

6 (a) Examine the vulnerable populations disproportionately
7 affected;

8 (b) Evaluate existing processes for benefit disbursement and
9 identify bottlenecks causing delays;

10 (c) Analyze the correlation between benefit delays and housing
11 insecurity, specifically examining if a delay in receiving benefits
12 was a contributing factor to the individual becoming homeless;

13 (d) Explore best practices from other states or jurisdictions to
14 expedite benefit delivery; and

15 (e) Consider and recommend technological enhancements, staffing
16 levels, and administrative reforms to streamline processes.

17 (4) In conducting the study, the employment security department
18 shall consult with the existing unemployment insurance advisory
19 committee as well as housing and homelessness nonprofit
20 organizations.

21 (5) The employment security department must submit an initial
22 report to the legislature with the findings and recommendations from
23 the study by December 1, 2025, and a final report to the legislature
24 with the analysis and any recommendations by December 1, 2028.

25 (6) This section expires July 1, 2029.

26 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 50.20
27 RCW to read as follows:

28 (1) On the effective date of this section, the department shall
29 establish an escalation pathway for individuals facing prolonged
30 benefit delays due to exceptional circumstances.

31 (a) Such circumstances may include imminent housing insecurity or
32 other critical needs.

33 (b) The pathway must prioritize expedited review and resolution
34 of claims to prevent homelessness.

35 (2) The department shall ask each unemployment claimant about
36 their housing security status at the time of the initial claim and in
37 any follow-up written or verbal communications. If the claimant
38 identifies themselves as housing insecure, the department shall

1 connect them directly to services in their area including, but not
2 limited to:

3 (a) Housing voucher provider programs;

4 (b) Nonprofit housing charity programs; or

5 (c) Rental assistance programs.

6 (3) The department shall maintain data for claimants' reported
7 housing insecurity and how many times the department connected
8 claimants to services.

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