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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

### **HB 6344 (as amended by House "A")\***

#### ***AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF THE UNEMPLOYED WORKERS' ADVOCATE.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill requires the labor commissioner, within available appropriations, to establish the Office of the Unemployed Workers' Advocate within the Department of Labor (DOL) to assist unemployed people.

The bill requires the commissioner, by October 1, 2021, to designate an "unemployed workers' advocate," who serves at the pleasure of the commissioner, to manage the office's daily activities and duties. The advocate must have the qualifications needed to perform the office's duties, including expertise in unemployment benefits and advocacy for unemployed people's rights. The advocate must, within available appropriations, appoint and employ the assistants, employees, and personnel needed to effectively and efficiently administer the office's activities.

\*House Amendment "A" requires that the unemployed workers' advocate be designated by October 1, 2021, rather than by July 1, 2021.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

#### **OFFICE POWERS**

The bill allows the Office of the Unemployed Workers' Advocate to:

1. help unemployed people seeking unemployment benefits;
2. help unemployed people understand their rights and responsibilities related to unemployment benefits;
3. provide information to the public, agencies, legislators, and others about unemployed people's problems and concerns, and

- make recommendations for resolving them;
4. help unemployed people file unemployment benefit appeals;
  5. analyze and monitor the development and implementation of federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies related to unemployed people, and recommend changes the office deems necessary to the appropriate governmental entity;
  6. receive and review unemployed people's complaints and make recommendations to the labor commissioner for resolving them;
  7. access an unemployed person's prior employment records to the extent that state and federal law allows;
  8. establish and maintain an Internet website and a toll-free number, or any other free calling option, that allows unemployed people to access the office's services and information; and
  9. take any other actions needed to fulfill the bill's purposes.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Labor and Public Employees Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 9 Nay 4 (03/25/2021)

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 48 Nay 0 (05/03/2021)