



# House of Representatives

**File No. 725**

General Assembly

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January Session, 2021 **(Reprint of File No. 428)**

House Bill No. 6344  
As Amended by House Amendment  
Schedule "A"

Approved by the Legislative Commissioner  
May 26, 2021

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

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

- 1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Labor Commissioner  
2 shall, within available appropriations, establish the Office of the  
3 Unemployed Workers' Advocate within the Labor Department to  
4 provide assistance to individuals who are unemployed.
- 5 (b) The Office of the Unemployed Workers' Advocate may:
- 6 (1) Assist unemployed individuals seeking benefits administered by  
7 the Labor Department under chapter 567 of the general statutes;
- 8 (2) Assist unemployed individuals to understand their rights and  
9 responsibilities with respect to benefits administered by the department  
10 under chapter 567 of the general statutes;
- 11 (3) Provide information to the public, state agencies, legislators and

12 others regarding the problems and concerns of unemployed individuals  
13 and make recommendations for resolving such problems and concerns;

14 (4) Assist unemployed individuals with the filing of appeals in  
15 connection with the benefits administered by the department under  
16 chapter 567 of the general statutes;

17 (5) Analyze and monitor the development and implementation of  
18 federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies relating to  
19 unemployed individuals and recommend changes the office deems  
20 necessary to the appropriate federal, state or local governmental entity;

21 (6) Receive and review complaints of unemployed individuals and  
22 make recommendations to the commissioner for resolving such  
23 complaints;

24 (7) Access prior employment records of an unemployed individual to  
25 the extent permitted under state and federal law;

26 (8) Establish and maintain an Internet web site and a toll-free number,  
27 or any other free calling option, to allow unemployed individuals access  
28 to the services and information provided by the Office of the  
29 Unemployed Workers' Advocate; and

30 (9) Take any other actions necessary to fulfill the purposes of this  
31 section.

32 (c) Not later than October 1, 2021, the Labor Commissioner shall  
33 designate an Unemployed Workers' Advocate, who shall serve at the  
34 pleasure of the commissioner, to manage the daily activities and duties  
35 of the Office of the Unemployed Workers' Advocate. The Unemployed  
36 Workers' Advocate shall have the necessary qualifications to perform  
37 the duties of said office, including, but not limited to, having expertise  
38 and experience in the fields of unemployment compensation benefits  
39 and advocacy for the rights of unemployed individuals. Within  
40 available appropriations, the Unemployed Workers' Advocate shall  
41 appoint and employ such assistants, employees and personnel as

42 deemed necessary for the efficient and effective administration of the  
43 activities of the office.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>from passage</i>	New section

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

**OFA Fiscal Note**

**State Impact:**

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 22 \$	FY 23 \$
Labor Dept.	GF - Potential Cost	Up to 430,981	Up to 579,705
State Comptroller - Fringe Benefits <sup>1</sup>	GF - Potential Cost	Up to 167,877	Up to 239,418

Note: GF=General Fund

**Municipal Impact:** None

**Explanation**

The bill, which requires the labor commissioner to establish the Office of the Unemployed Workers' Advocate, results in a potential cost of up to \$598,858 in FY 22 and up to \$819,123 in FY 23.

The bill requires the designation of an "unemployed workers' advocate" to manage the office's daily activities and duties, as well as appoint and employ the assistants, employees, and personnel needed to effectively and efficiently administer the office's activities.

The cost of the office and personnel are dependent on the way the requirements of the bill are satisfied. To the extent the agency hires all new, additional personnel to establish the office, there is a cost of up to \$598,858 in FY 22 and up to \$819,123 in FY 23 associated with salary and fringe benefit costs for up to seven positions (including the advocate

<sup>1</sup>The fringe benefit costs for most state employees are budgeted centrally in accounts administered by the Comptroller. The estimated active employee fringe benefit cost associated with most personnel changes is 41.3% of payroll in FY 22 and FY 23.

position itself), as well as one-time information technology and office set-up costs estimated at up to \$24,500 in FY 22 only. However, to the extent that the agency is able to utilize existing personnel and equipment for some or all of the functions, the cost could be less.

House "A" pushes back the date by which the Labor Commissioner must designate an Unemployed Workers' Advocate, which reduces the potential cost by up to \$191,453 in FY 22 only (\$135,494 in the Labor Department and \$55,959 in the State Comptroller- Fringe Benefits account).

### ***The Out Years***

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation.

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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)