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SENATE BILL NO. 1120

Senate Amendments in [] - January 30, 2023

Prefiled January 10, 2023

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 60.2-111 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the Virginia Employment Commission; authorized representative or member of Commission; powers.*

Patrons Prior to Engrossment—Senators Stanley and Reeves

Referred to Committee on Commerce and Labor

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 60.2-111 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 60.2-111. Duties and powers of Commission; reporting requirements.

A. It shall be the duty of the Commission to administer this title. It shall have power and authority to adopt, amend, or rescind such rules and regulations, to employ such persons, make such expenditures, require such reports, make such investigations, and take such other action, including the appointment of advisory groups, as it deems necessary or suitable to that end. Such rules and regulations shall be subject to the provisions of Chapter 40 (§ 2.2-4000 et seq.) of Title 2.2, except as to the subject matter of subdivisions 2 and 3 of § 60.2-515, which shall become effective in the manner prescribed by § 2.2-4103. The Commission shall determine its own organization and methods of procedure in accordance with provisions of this title, and shall have an official seal which shall be judicially noticed. *In the discharge of the duties imposed by this title, [an attorney for] the Commissioner shall have the authority to [~~authorize any representative or member of the Commission to have the power to administer oaths and affirmations, take depositions, certify to official acts, and~~] issue subpoenas to compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of books, papers, correspondence, memoranda, and other records deemed necessary as evidence in connection with the investigation or adjudication of any disputed claim or the administration of this title. [Any party who disputes such subpoena may file a motion to quash any subpoena issued pursuant to this section prior to the date production is required in a miscellaneous action in a circuit court for which such motion shall be given priority on the docket.]*

B. The Commission shall prepare an annual balance sheet of the moneys in the fund and in the Unemployment Trust Fund to the credit of the Commonwealth in which there shall be provided, if possible, a reserve against the liability in future years to pay benefits in excess of the then-current taxes. That reserve shall be set up by the Commission in accordance with accepted actuarial principles on the basis of statistics of employment, business activity, and other relevant factors for the longest possible period. Whenever the Commission believes that a change in tax or benefit rates is necessary to protect the solvency of the Fund, it shall promptly so inform the Governor and the General Assembly and make recommendations with respect thereto.

C. In preparing the annual balance sheet required by subsection B, the Commission shall regularly track metrics related to unemployment insurance benefits, establish a mechanism to help assess the adequacy of benefits, and examine metrics related to reciprocity, average benefit levels, and benefit income replacement ratios. The annual balance sheet shall include the following calculations: (i) the average unemployment insurance benefit levels, (ii) the average income replacement of unemployment insurance benefits, and (iii) the reciprocity rate for unemployment insurance benefits in the Commonwealth.

D. The Commission, as part of its biennial strategic plan submitted to the Department of Planning and Budget, shall develop and maintain a comprehensive unemployment insurance Resiliency Plan that describes specific actions the Commission will take, depending on the level of increase in unemployment insurance (UI) claims, to address staffing, communications, and other relevant aspects of operations to ensure continued efficient and effective administration of the UI program. The Resiliency Plan shall include proposed actions consistent with the following objectives to effectively prepare for periods of high unemployment:

1. Develop specific strategies or steps the Commission will take to modify staffing levels in response to incidents that increase UI program demand. These strategies or steps shall (i) include a staffing plan for varying levels of UI workload volume, (ii) cover several scenarios that may affect UI assistance services, (iii) explain how existing staff would be reallocated to high-priority functions in response to high demand, and (iv) describe how the Commission's hiring process will be streamlined to fill key vacant positions such as adjudication and appeals staff.

2. Develop specific strategies or steps the Commission will take to modify policies, procedures, or processes in response to high demands on its services.

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- 59 3. Outline a strategy for clearly communicating key UI program changes to customers. This strategy
60 shall indicate which staff will be responsible for different types of communications and include several
61 communications goals, such as clearly conveying UI program and policy changes.
- 62 4. Outline a strategy for clearly communicating important UI information to Commission staff, the
63 public, and the General Assembly.
- 64 5. Formalize a policy for prioritizing and assigning claims for adjudication during periods of high
65 claims volume. This policy shall detail how prioritization may change in response to claims volume and
66 state that the policy of the Commission is to generally prioritize resolving older claims before newer
67 claims.
- 68 6. Identify other tactical actions to be taken to ensure the continuity of UI claims processing and
69 customer service.