SENATE DOCKET, NO. 2040 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 1320

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Paul R. Feeney

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act to increase unemployment insurance benefits for low wage workers.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
Paul R. Feeney	*Bristol and Norfolk*	
John F. Keenan	*Norfolk and Plymouth*	*4/1/2025*

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 2040 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 1320

By Mr. Feeney, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1320) of Paul R. Feeney for legislation to increase unemployment insurance benefits for low wage workers. Labor and Workforce Development.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. *1175* OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)

An Act to increase unemployment insurance benefits for low wage workers.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Subsection (a) of section 24 of chapter 151A of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking, in line 4, the words “thirty times the weekly benefit rate” and inserting in place thereof the following words:-

"fifteen times the individual’s average weekly wage in the base period, provided that when there is a reduction in the benefit rate from thirty times to twenty-six times the benefit rate under subsection (a) of section 30, an individual shall have been paid wages in the base period amounting to at least thirteen times the individual’s average weekly wage; provided that if the individual is thereby rendered ineligible for benefits, the individual shall have been paid wages in two quarters of the base period."

SECTION 2. Section 29 of chapter 151A of the General. Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out subsection (a) and inserting in place thereof the following subsection:-

(a) An individual in total unemployment and otherwise eligible for benefits shall be paid for each week of unemployment an amount equal to fifty percent of the individual's average weekly wage in their base period, rounded to the next lower full dollar amount; but not more, exclusive of dependency benefits, than fifty-seven and one-half per cent of the average weekly wage of all employees covered by this chapter; nor less than twenty per cent of the average weekly wage of all employees covered by this chapter or seventy-five percent of the individual's average weekly wage, whichever is less, exclusive of dependency benefits. On or before the first day of October of each year, the total wages reported on contribution reports for the twelve months ending March the thirty-first of such year shall be divided by the average monthly number of insured employees (determined by dividing the total insured employees reported on contribution reports for the twelve months ending March the thirty-first by twelve). The average annual wage thus obtained shall be divided by fifty-two and the average weekly wage determined, rounded to the nearest cent. Fifty-seven and one-half per cent of this amount, rounded to the next lower full dollar amount shown shall establish the weekly benefit rate paid any individual whose benefit year commences on or after the first Sunday of October of each year and prior to the first Sunday of October the following year. Twenty per cent of the average weekly wage of all employees covered by this chapter, rounded to the next lower full dollar amount shown shall establish the minimum weekly benefit rate paid any individual whose benefit year commences on or after the first Sunday of October each year and prior to the first Sunday of October the following year, provided that the weekly benefit rate which an individual

may receive during the individual's benefit year exclusive of dependency benefits is not greater than seventy-five per cent of the individual's average weekly wage.

SECTION 3. Section 30 of chapter 151A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out subsection (a) and inserting in place thereof the following subsection:-

(a) Except as provided in subsection (b), the total benefits which an unemployed individual may receive during the benefit year shall be an amount equal to sixty percent of the individual's wages in the base period, or an amount equal to 30 times the individual's weekly benefit rate in the base period, whichever is less, plus dependency benefits payable under section 29; provided, however, that if any month the average local unemployment for the last 12 months, as determined by the United States Department of Labor, is equal to or below 5.1 per cent in each of the 10 metropolitan statistical areas of the commonwealth, the total benefits which an unemployed individual who then files a claim may receive during the individual's benefit year shall be an amount equal to 60 per cent of their wages in the base period or an amount equal to 26 times the individual's weekly benefit rate, whichever is less, plus dependency benefits payable under said section 29; provided further that no such reduction in benefit rate from 30 times to 26 times the weekly benefit rate due to the operation of this section shall occur to an individual's total benefit amount if, in any month during the individual's benefit year, the requirements of this section have not been met. If such amount includes a fractional part of a dollar, it shall be rounded to the next lower full dollar amount.