

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE TRUST FUND STUDY COMMISSION

MINUTES EIGHTH MEETING OF COMMISSION MEMBERS FRIDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2021

TIME: 1 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT: Senator Pat Jehlen (Co-Chair), Representative Josh Cutler (Co-Chair), Secretary Rosalin Acosta, Director Rick Jeffers, Chris Carlozzi, Brooke Thompson, Jon Hurst, Diana Estime, Stephanie Herron Rice, John Drinkwater, Evan Horowitz, Karen Andreas, Kelsey Cintolo, Sam Gebru, Steve Clark, Hannah Tanabe, Eileen McAnney, Rich Marlin, Carolyn Ryan
ALSO PRESENT: Andrew Stettner (Century Foundation)

- I. **Welcome Remarks.** Brief remarks from Senator Pat Jehlen
- II. **Roll Call and Meeting Minutes.** Chair Jehlen took roll. Minutes from the July 16th, July 22nd, and September 17th meetings were approved as written via a voice vote.
- III. **Presentation from Andrew Stettner of the Century Foundation.** Senator Jehlen introduced Andrew Stettner to provide an overview of how Massachusetts' unemployment benefits compare to other state programs. Mr. Stettner discussed the formulas used for indexing of maximum benefits. The maximum benefit for unemployed workers in Massachusetts is adjusted each year to be equal to 57.5% of the state Average Weekly Wage, which is less than the national average of 58% among the 33 states that index their maximum weekly benefit. Mr. Stettner also noted that the average weekly wage increased sharply over the last year due to composition of the Massachusetts economy during the pandemic, where higher wage jobs recovered more quickly than lower wage jobs. Mr. Stettner also discussed workers who are left out of the unemployment benefit system, including misclassified workers, gig workers, freelancers, and workers paid in cash. After Mr. Stettner spoke, there was a brief question and answer period.
- IV. **Discussion on Potential Needs for Additional Data.** Members of the commission discussed what modeling of effects they may want to see before considering recommending changes to the Massachusetts unemployment system. Sen Jehlen encouraged members of the commission to email staff with their requests for modeling, which the staff would then provide to the Department of Unemployment Assistance.
- V. **Adjournment.** Meeting adjourned at 3:04 pm.