

**American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees**  
*One strong united voice for Minnesota workers*

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February 14, 2022

Dear Honorable Senator:

AFSCME Council 5 represents over 43,000 workers in Minnesota. We believe there is dignity in all work and there should be dignity and opportunity for all workers. Unfortunately, our current Unemployment Insurance system does not adequately value all of Minnesota's workers, many of whom are not eligible to receive U.I. benefits. Although S.F. 2677 invests significant resources in our U.I. system, none of these resources are targeted to rectify this flaw. Now is our chance to expand unemployment benefits to more workers; not doing so would be a missed opportunity.

Additionally, the experiences of everyone working on the frontlines throughout the COVID-19 pandemic must be recognized and this recognition must be prioritized before an enormous tax break for businesses. Frontline workers are still waiting on the Senate to pass meaningful frontline worker pay to recognize their sacrifices to keep our state economy running. A Minnesota that respects frontline workers is one that fairly compensates those who do the work and keeps workers who lose their jobs afloat until they can get back on their feet.

Respecting our work means recognizing the sacrifices we made while providing vital services at great risk of contracting COVID and exposing our families, recognition which is long overdue. Respecting our work also means making investments in the systems that lift us up when times are hard, and making sure no worker is left behind. Our unemployment system left thousands of workers on the outside looking in, forcing them to take money out of their retirements, run up credit card debt, sell their assets and keepsakes, all while the pandemic didn't even give them the option to find alternative work to make ends meet.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Bleyhl".

Julie Bleyhl  
Executive Director  
AFSCME Council 5