

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For First Time Ever, the Minnesota House Voted to Extend Unemployment Insurance for Hourly School Employees

SOUTH SAINT PAUL - Today, [AFSCME Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl](#) released the following statement following Minnesota House passing legislation to extend unemployment insurance benefits for hourly school district employees.

"Hourly school employees across Minnesota and our union expressed excitement that [HF1054](#), a bill that updates state law so hourly school employees would be eligible for unemployment insurance, has passed off the House floor for the first time ever.

"Currently tens of thousands of dedicated school staff – the paraprofessionals, clerical workers, ESPs, bus drivers, food service workers and more who are the backbone of our schools – have no access to unemployment like most other workers in Minnesota, leaving them without pay during summer months because of a decades-old law that doesn't allow them access. These jobs are often done by women and most have been highlighted as "essential" during this pandemic when they've helped to keep schools running.

"Hourly school employees from all around the state have spoken out about the need to fix this outdated law that makes it hard for Minnesotans to be able to make ends meet doing this critical work. Our members continue to push this legislation and spoke before its passage to highlight why the House passing this bill is so important to support school staff, students and our communities. Our united union activism continues to produce incredible results.

"Rochelle Stoffel, a Middle School Clerk with Saint Paul Public Schools and member of Local 844, Council 5 has pushed this legislation forward by sharing her story and the need for this legislation. She said, "Last summer, I was unable to receive any unemployment help when the school year ended and I lost my other jobs. My job as a clerk at a middle school prevented me from receiving the help I needed. I know I wasn't alone in having to do what I had to so I could make ends meet. We feel that we've been penalized for the work that we do. We need to reform our UI system so my coworkers and I don't fall through the cracks again. I'm fearful that without change, I'll be in the exact same position I was in a year ago."

AFSCME Council 5 is a union of more than 43,000 working Minnesotans from across the state. We advocate for excellence in services for the public, dignity in the workplace, and opportunity and prosperity for all workers.



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"We are grateful for the continued activism of our members. AFSCME Council 5 calls on the Minnesota Senate to pass legislation to extend unemployment insurance benefits to hourly school employees."

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