



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Rep. Mark Spreitzer and Legislative Colleagues Seek Clarity on PUA Program Guidance**

MADISON - On September 2nd, State Representative Mark Spreitzer (D-Beloit) and his legislative colleagues sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Labor, Wisconsin's Members of Congress, and President Donald Trump sharing concerns that Wisconsinites are falling through the cracks of the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program.

"The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program was intended for people whose lives are being directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but who do not qualify for regular state unemployment programs," Spreitzer said. "Unfortunately, we are increasingly hearing from constituents who do not qualify for PUA because of limited guidance from the Department of Labor. These Wisconsinites need help, and we are asking for clarity as soon as possible."

The letter from state legislators follows up on requests for additional guidance made by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development to the federal Department of Labor. Specifically at issue is Unemployment Insurance Program Letter 16-20, which provided instructions to states for implementing the PUA program. That letter provides limited guidance for individuals who "quit a job as a direct result of COVID-19." This guidance does not contemplate other fact patterns that a plain language reading of the CARES Act - and the lived experience of Wisconsinites - would say are a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I have constituents in my district who had to quit their jobs to care for children or grandchildren during the early days of the pandemic," Spreitzer said. "Now, with some schools reopening and some childcare becoming available, those parents and grandparents are being denied further unemployment benefits even though their old jobs are no longer available to return to. Without clarity from the Department of Labor, the current guidance does not allow them to continue receiving PUA even though they are still unemployed."

The legislators hope that by bringing additional attention to this issue, constituents who are being barred from receiving benefits will be able to get relief.

"We all know that the COVID-19 pandemic has had drastic impacts on the lives of Wisconsinites, and with clarification from the Department of Labor, we will be able to help lighten that burden," Spreitzer said. "The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the urgent need for structural reform of our state's unemployment program. I am committed to working with the Department and my legislative colleagues on this reform -- but right now, we need to solve the current crisis and ensure that the PUA program is working as intended."

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