



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Media Release

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Assembly Workforce Development Committee Democrats: Statement on Assembly Bill 237

MADISON- This week, the Assembly Committee on Workforce Development held its first public hearing and executive session of the 2021-22 session on Assembly Bill 237 (AB 237), relating to the state unemployment reserve fund. AB 237 is part of a package of Republican-authored bills that are being rushed through the legislative process in an attempt to restrict executive authority and exert legislative control over the allocation of funds from the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

Democratic members of the Assembly Committee on Workforce Development released the following statements:

"Over a year into the Covid-19 pandemic, and four months into the new legislative session, our committee's first action was to push through this rushed legislation along party lines," said Rep. Katrina Shankland (D-Stevens Point), the ranking Democratic legislator on the committee.

"There are so many issues facing our communities that we could be tackling together instead of legislation that doesn't even have a price tag yet. For example, Wisconsin is currently losing millions in federal funding every week by not waiving the one-week waiting period for unemployment benefits. My Democratic colleagues and I offered an amendment to address this, but our amendment was rejected on a party-line vote. The people of Wisconsin can't afford the cost of inaction."

Rep. Christine Sinicki (D-Milwaukee) continued, "This is a frustrating and alarming tone for my Republican colleagues to set for our committee work this session. Our focus should be on finding meaningful solutions to the serious problems our constituents are facing, not micromanaging the governor over authority that the federal government specifically designated to him. That's why we've been pushing to end the one-week waiting period and ensure our constituents and folks across Wisconsin can get the support they need as soon as possible."

Rep. Deb Andraca (D-Whitefish Bay) added, "Rushing to make a new law before we have all the facts is irresponsible. We don't know if the U.S. Treasury will allow us to use the funds in this way, and we don't know the size of the shortfall in the UI trust fund. We will have all of this information in a few weeks and can make thoughtful decisions at that time. This is not governing, it's gamesmanship. Taxpayers deserve better."

Rep. Dora Drake (D-Milwaukee) stated, "It's especially concerning that if these federal dollars are expended outside of the U.S. Treasury's permitted scope, Wisconsin could end up on the hook to pay it all back. I hope that as we continue this legislative session, my fellow committee members will be open to more thoughtful and genuine bipartisan collaboration on the legislation before us. We are here to support our communities and pass laws that will improve lives, not to play games."

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