



October 31, 2016

**Dear Unemployment Compensation Reform Joint Committee Member,**

As you and your colleagues consider ways to shore up Ohio's unemployment compensation trust fund, we the undersigned organizations urge you to consider the impact on Ohio's most vulnerable workers—a category that includes many of Ohio's working women. The undersigned organizations are members of the Ohio Women's Public Policy Network, a statewide coalition of organizations focused on policies that impact women and families.

Because Ohio's outdated unemployment compensation eligibility rules favor higher-wage and full-time work, women—who are more likely to work for low-pay or part-time—are less likely to receive benefits than their male counterparts. One recent analysis showed that, over the past decade, **women made up over 43 percent of Ohio's unemployed, but just 36 percent of those receiving unemployment compensation.**<sup>i</sup> This gender gap is seen in a number of states where policies remain based on outdated notions of work and family.

Indeed, Ohio's program requires laid-off workers to have earned a minimum average weekly wage that would be hard to achieve in many low-paying jobs, particularly those with unstable and unpredictable schedules. Under Ohio's program rules, a worker making \$25 per hour for just 10 hours per week would be eligible to receive benefits after becoming unemployed, while a minimum wage employee working 29 hours a week would not.<sup>ii</sup> And **even if a part-time worker earned enough to qualify for benefits, if they seek anything less than a full-time job—even one with the exact same schedule as the job they lost—they remain ineligible under another of Ohio's antiquated rules.**

These obvious inequities can do real harm to families headed by women, who are statistically far more likely to work in low wage and part-time jobs. 43% of women in the state's workforce are employed part-time, compared to just 29% of men.<sup>iii</sup> Working fewer hours at lower-paying jobs means that women in Ohio take home \$478 per week, compared to \$710 for men.<sup>iv</sup> For African American women, weekly take-home pay for those with earnings works out to just \$410.<sup>v</sup>

For the more than 587,000 Ohio family households headed by women, over 32 percent live in poverty. And nearly 43 percent of the 167,000 Ohio families headed by African American women are living in poverty. Losing a job has serious impacts on women and their families.<sup>vi</sup> A national study found that 77 percent of unemployed women with children reported reducing spending on their kids and 60 percent cut spending on medical and dental care.<sup>vii</sup>

In Ohio, weekly benefits paid by the program are already very low. According to the US Department of Labor data from the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2016, the average recipient of unemployment

benefits in Ohio gets barely above minimum wage—just \$352 per week.<sup>viii</sup> **For a single working mother with one child, current benefit levels are just enough to keep the family from falling into poverty.**

Ohio passed up \$176 million in federal funds in 2011 when it failed to enact reforms that would have increased eligibility for unemployment benefits for workers in low-wage and part-time jobs, a move which would have helped women receive their fair share of jobless benefits.<sup>ix</sup> To keep more Ohio women and their families out of poverty, **policymakers should ensure that current efforts to reform Ohio’s Unemployment Compensation system do not reduce program benefits, duration or eligibility. Additionally, reform effort should look to modernize our system to address the new realities of today’s workforce, including more part-time and low-wage workers, and a greater share of women**—many of whom are the sole breadwinners for their families.

Sincerely,

### **Women’s Public Policy Network Member Organizations**

American Association of University Women (AAUW) of Ohio  
Cleveland Jobs with Justice  
Innovation Ohio Education Fund  
Majority Ohio  
National Council of 100 Black Women Central Ohio Chapter  
Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence  
Ohio Domestic Violence Network  
Ohio NOW  
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio  
ProgressOhio

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<sup>i</sup> West, Rachel, Indivar Dutta-Gupta, Kali Grant, Melissa Boteach, Claire McKenna, and Judy Conti. *Where States Are and Where They Should Be on Unemployment Protections*. Center for American Progress, National Employment Law Center and Center on Poverty and Inequality, Georgetown Law. July 7, 2016. <http://www.nelp.org/content/uploads/Issue-Brief-State-Unemployment-Protections.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Schiller, Zach. "Better Plan Needed for Unemployment Compensation System." Testimony to the Unemployment Compensation Reform Joint Committee. September 15, 2016. <http://www.policymattersohio.org/uc-testimony-sept2016>

<sup>iii</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table C23022 "Sex by Full-Time Work." October 26, 2016.

<sup>iv</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table B20017 "Median Earnings In The Past 12 Months (In 2015 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) By Sex By Work Experience In The Past 12 Months For The Population 16 Years And Over With Earnings In The Past 12 Months" October 1, 2016.

<sup>v</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table B20017B "Median Earnings In The Past 12 Months (In 2015 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) By Sex By Work Experience In The Past 12 Months For The Population 16 Years And Over With Earnings In The Past 12 Months (Black or African American Alone)" October 31, 2016

<sup>vi</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S1702 "Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months of Families." October 1, 2016.

<sup>vii</sup> Peter Hart Research "Unemployed in America: A Look at Unemployed Women and Families." Survey of 413 unemployed adults conducted April 17-28, 2003. Commissioned by National Employment Law Project. <http://www.nelp.org/content/uploads/2015/03/SurveyWomen.pdf>

<sup>viii</sup> Unemployment Insurance Data Summary - 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter, 2016. U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. [http://workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/unemploy/content/data\\_stats/datasum16/DataSum\\_2016\\_2.pdf](http://workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/unemploy/content/data_stats/datasum16/DataSum_2016_2.pdf)

<sup>ix</sup> Koff, Stephen. "Ohio Says 'no' to \$176 Million in Federal Aid for Jobless Benefits." *Cleveland.com*, August 22, 2011. [http://www.cleveland.com/open/index.ssf/2011/08/ohio\\_says\\_no\\_to\\_176\\_million\\_in.html](http://www.cleveland.com/open/index.ssf/2011/08/ohio_says_no_to_176_million_in.html)