Open Letter to Arizona Elected Officials

Both the shutdown and the reopening of Arizona’s economy create massive financial and health challenges to Arizona’s working families. To address these challenges, we call on Governor Ducey to take executive action to keep our community safe. To do so, gaps in unemployment protections and workplace health and safety measures must be addressed immediately.

Unemployment filings in Arizona have skyrocketed and are now set to top 500,000. Hard-working Arizonans are struggling to take care of their bills and families while they wait for the green light to get back to their jobs or to a full schedule.

Meanwhile, people who are still working, or are headed back to work, may face dire health and safety hazards during the COVID crisis. Protections have been slow to come and remain inadequate. Without proper health and safety measures not only workers but the broader public remain at great risk. That risk will worsen as we start to re-open our economy.

The time to take action is now! We call on Governor Ducey to take executive action that will protect the hard working Arizonans that are keeping our economy moving. Specifically:

Unemployment protections that ensure unemployment benefits are widely available and can help get the state’s economy up and running again while keeping workers and families safe.

- **Raise the Unemployment Insurance benefit** from $240 to $490 per week to place Arizona in line with other states.
- **Lower the qualification threshold** by reducing the number of hours one would have to work to qualify for these benefits from an average of 30 hours per week to 20 hours per week for minimum wage workers.
- **Raise the “Income Disregard”** by increasing the number of hours someone can work before they are removed from unemployment benefits altogether. Increase it immediately from $30 to $100 weekly until the cap on unemployment insurance is addressed, then fix it to ¼ of the benefit amount.
- **Create an “Alternative Base Period”** allowing people to include the most recent full 3 months of calendar quarter worked work as an additional alternative opportunity to qualify for unemployment insurance.
- **Good Cause Exception / Suitable Work** further clarifying that workers are also eligible for UI benefits if they leave a job, decline to accept a job, or do not report back to work because the employer is not following CDC guidance complying with CDC guidelines to protect public health including that of its employees, members of its employees’ households, and the general public.
- **Streamline the processing of applications** including simplifying the weekly filing requirement to avoid confusion for employees furloughed or laid off.

Strict worker health and safety standards to ensure safe workplaces and protect workers who speak up about hazards.

- **Require employers to implement health and safety precautions based on CDC workplace guidance including** providing (1) social distancing; (2) face masks; (3) hand sanitizing, hand washing and gloves; (4) regular disinfection; (5) ventilation; (6) notifying workers of illness in the
workplace; and (7) deep cleaning after confirmed cases should apply broadly to all employers in all industries, and not be limited simply to “essential” industries.

- **Whistleblower protections** so workers feel free to speak up about threats to their health and safety from COVID-19 to mitigate the spread of the virus. No employer should discriminate or take adverse action against any worker who raises any concern about workplace health and safety practices.

- **Protections for refusal to work under dangerous conditions** giving workers the right to refuse to work under conditions that the worker reasonably believes could expose him or her, other workers, or the public to an unreasonable risk of illness or exposure to COVID-19 based on CDC guidance.

- **Presumption of State Workers Compensation coverage** for all workers during the COVID-19 crisis ensuring that COVID-19 and any associated quarantine are covered by the state workers’ compensation program. Importantly, workers’ compensation coverage is universally available to all sick workers, regardless of factors such as immigration status.

- **Strong enforcement** of these important new protections is crucial for them to be effective.

Arizona workers are leading the way as we reopen our state. It’s time for Governor Ducey to stand with hard-working people and protect the safety, health, and financial security of all Arizonans. These actions should be implemented by Executive Order until the state legislature convenes to adopt these changes permanently.

Arizona Center for Economic Progress  
CASE (Central Arizonans for a Sustainable Economy)  
LUCHA  
National Employment Law Project  
Opportunity Arizona  
UNITE HERE Local 11  
United Food and Commercial Workers Local 99  
William E. Morris Institute for Justice