

**SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE**
Oregon State Legislature

State Capitol

Salem, Oregon

Press Release

August 10, 2020

CONTACT: Amanda Kraus, 503-986-1074

 Amanda.Kraus@oregonlegislature.gov

**Senate Democrats Give Struggling**

**Oregonians Unemployment Insurance Support**

SALEM – The Oregon State Senate passed two bills to help Oregonians with Unemployment Insurance benefits. Senate Bill 1701 and 1703 received bipartisan support. These bills make changes to Oregon’s Unemployment Insurance program to give Oregonians flexibility as they get back to work and quicken the claims process for the Oregon Employment Department.

Senate Bill 1701 raises the cap on the amount of money a worker can earn before their earnings affect their Unemployment Insurance benefit amount. Currently, the cap is tied to either ten times the minimum wage ($115.00-$132.50) or a third of the individual’s total benefit amount. The benefit award is then lowered by a dollar for each dollar earned over the cap. Senate Bill 1701 raises that cap to a flat $300.

“Too many Oregonians have been out of work and deserve an opportunity continue their unemployment benefits and do part-time work,” said Senator Kathleen Taylor (D-Portland) who chairs the Senate Committee on Labor and Business. “Raising this threshold will give Oregonians a greater chance to provide for their families as they re-enter the workforce during this economically strenuous time.”

Senate Bill 1703 allows the Department of Revenue to share income-related information with the Employment Department. The purpose is to expedite the confirmation of income and benefits determination for self-employed workers and contractors who qualify for the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program (PUA).

“Gig workers, self-employed individuals and contractors have lost jobs and wages but do not typically qualify for traditional benefits,” said Senate Majority Leader Rob Wagner (D-Lake Oswego). “This will add efficiency to the Employment Department’s ability to approve PUA funds to Oregonians in need.”

“These bills reflect creative thinking in response to the great needs of unemployed Oregonians. Too many are struggling, and these changes will help,” added Senator Wagner.

Senate Bills 1701 and 1703 now go to the Oregon House of Representatives for consideration.

###