

Description	Current Law	Proposed Amendment	LD Section Reference
<b>Facilitate Returning to Work</b>			
<b>Definition of Partial Unemployment and Earnings offset</b>	<p>Partial unemployment occurs when someone <b>earns less</b> than their weekly unemployment <b>benefit plus \$5</b>.</p> <p>Someone who is eligible for \$350 in unemployment benefits receives nothing when they earn \$355 or more in one week. Someone who earns \$354 in the same week would be eligible for a reduced benefit.</p>	<p>Amend 26 MRS §1043 sub-§17(B) to define partial unemployment as <b>earnings less than</b> their weekly <b>benefit plus \$100 adjusted annually</b> on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of June by any increase in the cost of living as measured by the CPI-W for the Northeast Region as of the previous December.</p> <p>Additionally, the same <b>cost of living increase</b>, if any, will be applied <b>to the \$100 earnings offset</b> under 26 MRS §1191 sub-§3, helping to remove the barrier to picking up temporary, part-time work until full employment is obtained. The cost of living adjustments will keep these conditions current with economic conditions.</p>	1 14
<b>Reemployment Services</b>	<p><b>Waives required participation</b> in Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) for anyone who has <b>participated in the last 5 years</b>.</p>	<p><b>Repeal the statutory exemption</b>. Increasing participation would reduce repeated reliance on UI benefits – better for the individual and better for the trust fund. Initial federal requirements dictated in-person visits that were burdensome for people who had to travel distances to participate or risk losing their UI benefits. The program now has greater flexibility to allow for virtual services.</p>	21
<b>Expand UI Coverage</b>			
<b>Definition of High Unemployment</b>	<p><b>On/Off Trigger</b> for Maine’s 13-week Extended Benefit (EB) and 7-week High Unemployment EB (HEB) programs <b>linked only to claims volume</b>. <b>Caused EB to end earlier than other states</b> and HEB to never go into effect during pandemic.</p>	<p><b>Include</b> Maine’s total <b>unemployment rate (TUR) in the determination</b> of program effective dates, as opposed to only determining based on claims data. 11 other states have TUR in their law: New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Connecticut and New Jersey for the northeast.</p>	27 28

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<b>Increase ability to support families</b>			
<b>Dependency Allowance</b>	<p>\$10/week for each dependent child, up to 50% of the weekly benefit amount. Amount has been the same since the allowance was enacted in 1989.</p>	<p>Increase to \$25/week for each dependent child, up to 75% of the weekly benefit amount. The amendment also removes the requirement that the dependent be 'wholly or mainly' supported by the individual receiving benefits although only one individual may receive dependency allowance for any week for which a claim is filed.</p>	15
<b>Temporary disqualification for the sudden loss of child or elder care, or transportation</b>	<p>Temporary disqualifications only for a "voluntary quit" is limited to domestic violence, moving with a spouse, or illness/disability that cannot be accommodated by the employer.</p> <p>Once situation is addressed, individual could become eligible for weekly benefits. Employer's experience rating is not charged.</p>	<p>Adds an exemption for people who suddenly lose child or eldercare, or transportation, creating an emergency that the employer cannot accommodate, which results in the loss of one's job. Proposal would waive the normal full disqualification for someone who must quit their job because of one of these situations. Once the individual resolves the issue and is able to work and actively seek work; they could begin collecting benefits after first checking with their former employer to see if there was work available. The employer's unemployment experience rate would not be charged.</p>	22
<b>Streamline program operations</b>			
<b>Efficiency of fact-finding &amp; adjudication</b>	<p>Requires an individual to 'personally appear' before an adjudicator. This had historically been done in person and shifted to live phone interviews mid-1990s.</p>	<p>Broaden the requirement for an individual to 'personally participate' in a fact-finding session to reflect how the process has worked for 23 years. Allow broader means of participation in addition to telephone with online interactions, such as email and written statement forms. Would improve efficiency of process, as decisions could be made on written statements provided by the claimant. Calls would be made if adjudicator had questions or needed more information.</p>	24
<b>Rulemaking Authority</b>	<p>Granted to the Unemployment Insurance Commission.</p>	<p>Grant authority to the Commissioner of Labor. Consistent with most other rules allowing the Commissioner that is responsible for program operations to administer the rules.</p>	2-6; 8-11; 13; 16-20; 23; 25-26; 29-33
<b>Overpayment Waivers</b>	<p>Authority given to the Unemployment Insurance Commission to grant waivers of benefit overpayments.</p>	<p>Grant authority to the Commissioner of Labor or designee. This is consistent with other states in which the ability to waive overpayments is granted to program administrator.</p>	

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<b>Remove Interest accrual on non-fraud overpayment recovery</b>	Interest begins accruing on nonfraud benefit overpayment balances that remain unpaid after a period of one year. Interest accrues at the rate of 1% per month until the debit is fully repaid.	This amendment eliminates interest accrual under 26 MRS §1051, sub-9 for overpayment debt that did not result from fraud. However, interest continues to apply to benefit overpayments resulting from misrepresentation and fraud.	7
<b>Reciency</b>	n/a	This amendment would require the department to provide an estimated impact of a proposed legislation on the unemployment insurance reciency rate.	12
<b>Reciency Analysis Report</b>	n/a	Requires the department to complete an analysis of the unemployment reciency rate identifying contributing factors & recommending actions for improvement. Report to be submitted to the Labor & Housing Committee by 2/1/2022.	34
<b>Stakeholder Working Group</b>	n/a	<p>Commissioner of Labor to convene a working group to review &amp; make recommendations to improve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Methods of connecting employers and unemployed workers</li> <li>• Efficiency &amp; effectiveness of the Workshare program</li> <li>• Effectiveness of provisions under 26 MRS §1044</li> </ul> <p>• Methods to facilitate application for and increase access to unemployment benefits, simplify employer reporting requirements, and identify possible clarifications or modifications needed around submission of partial unemployment claim forms, and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any software or technology issues contributing to delays, claims processing issues, paperwork burden to business that may be resolved through technological means, or ways to promote improved claimant or employer user experience and interface with the unemployment system.</li> </ul> <p>Submit a report and recommendations developed by the Unemployment Insurance Working Group to the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing by 1/15/2022.</p>	35

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<b>Peer Workforce Navigator Program</b>	n/a	Establishes a Peer Workforce Navigator pilot project to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote access to reemployment services</li> <li>• Assisting unemployed and underemployed individuals access resource to meet their basic needs during the reemployment process</li> <li>• Educating workers about the ability to obtain partial unemployment benefits</li> <li>• Raising awareness of the unemployment program in underserved populations</li> <li>• Identify systematic obstacles to receiving benefits or to becoming reemployed</li> </ul> The proposal renames Title 26 Chapter 26-A and creates two subchapters within it in order to implement the pilot program.	36-40