

U.S. Rep. Moore: Votes no on Surprise Billing Our Workers Act

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“We all can agree that those who committed unemployment insurance (UI) fraud during the COVID-19 pandemic should be held accountable. But that’s not the bill we have before us.

Again, House Republicans have advanced a failed and unserious proposal, one that undermines efforts to combat UI fraud while punishing hardworking Americans who were forced to rely on an antiquated UI system during the pandemic who may not even realize they were overpaid! For example, before this bill came to the floor, in the House Rules Committee, I offered amendments to protect foster youth and foster parents who received unemployment overpayments—through no fault of their own- from being forced to pay for someone else’s mistake. Foster youth, who already face numerous obstacles, were particularly affected by the turbulent job market early in this pandemic and relied on UI benefits to help them meet basic needs.

Under this bill, workers who received overpayments—again, through no fault of their own- could receive surprise bills 10 years after receiving the initial overpayment! And, again, many of these workers probably won’t know they were overpaid until they receive surprise bills.

Clearly, Republicans don’t want to provide our federal and state UI programs with the funds to improve their systems, support investigations and tackle fraud. According to the Congressional Budget Office, this **bill would be a net cut in federal investments to strengthen UI programs and prevent fraud**. Or put another way, if we did not pass this bill, the federal government would be spending more to investigate, find, and catch UI fraud than it will invest in those efforts after this bill becomes law.

Additionally, the record is crystal clear that every Congressional Republican in the 117th Congress voted no on the American Rescue Plan, which provided funding to the States and the Department of Labor's Inspector General to help detect fraud, ensure fraudsters are held accountable, and to help modernize the overwhelmed and underinvested state UI systems to prevent fraud and make it easier to detect. This bill would rescind billions in those ARP funds which again, are dedicated to supporting efforts to fight UI fraud.

I implore my Republicans to get serious and to bring forward real legislation that addresses systemic challenges in our UI systems, such as staffing shortages and technological deficiencies that make it easier for criminals to exploit the system, so we can better serve American workers in need of this critical support, and which boost efforts to stop criminal fraud and abuse.”