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For Immediate Release

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Rep. Kane: Additional unemployment benefits approved for 17,000 MA residents who failed to qualify for Lost Wages Assistance Program

BOSTON – State Representative Hannah Kane, R-Shrewsbury is pleased to announce that the House and Senate have approved the payout of additional unemployment benefits to Massachusetts residents who did not qualify for enhanced federal unemployment benefits over the summer.

Senate Bill 2934, which was signed into law by Governor Charlie Baker on October 26, will provide approximately 17,000 Massachusetts residents with up to \$1,800 in retroactive unemployment benefits. Representative Kane said these additional funds will help individuals and families pay for food, rent and other expenses during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Under the federal Lost Wages Assistance Program, individuals collecting unemployment were provided with an additional \$300 in weekly benefits over a six-week period this summer, beginning at the end of July and running through the first week of September. However, these federal funds were made available only to those individuals who were already receiving at least \$100 in state unemployment benefits.

Representative Kane said the new law recalculates the state's minimum weekly unemployment benefit at \$100 for the period covering the week ending August 1 through the week ending September 5. Making this change will allow the state to extend the federal lost wages benefits retroactively to those who previously failed to qualify.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance, approximately 461,000 standard unemployment insurance beneficiaries and 234,000 Pandemic Unemployment Assistance beneficiaries were deemed eligible for the Lost Wages Assistance Program over the summer. More than \$1.3 billion in supplemental federal funding was distributed under this program to eligible Massachusetts claimants, with the new law expected to provide another \$31 million in unemployment benefits.

After recording double-digit unemployment figures over the summer, the state's jobless rate dropped to 9.6 percent in September, with 365,400 residents out of work.

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