

Dear Chair Riley and Committee Members,

My name is Kaci Rae Christopher and I am a paraprofessional educational assistant with the Sisters School District. I am writing to ask you to support improving access to unemployment insurance for educators in my position, as well as others within our state's school districts.

As an educational assistant, I spend my work days supporting staff and students not only through the rigors of school and experiencing learning disabilities, but in the unprecedented time of Covid-19. Everyday, I expose myself and my family, because the mental, emotional, and academic well-being of our students and our school community matter so much. It's work that I am proud to do. This year has brought even more struggle than usual to my professional life, and while I get by on my current wages, I face a stressful time ahead of me this summer without months of paychecks and wages.

What would relieve this stress is a fair and clear way for me to apply for unemployment benefits during these summer months. I wish to be treated like other classified employees and to have the opportunity to apply for the same benefits as others. Please pass SB 495 and support me, and other educational assistants, in having access to fair processes and supportive services.

Sincerely,
Kaci Rae Christopher