

HB 2125 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards

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Meeting Dates: 2/5, 3/31

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Authorizes Director of Oregon Employment Department to waive unpaid waiting week period for unemployment insurance claimants who are unable to work as result of state-declared emergency related to severe weather. Takes effect on the 91st day following adjournment sine die.

Fiscal impact: No fiscal impact

Revenue impact: Minimal revenue impact

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Impact on business and employees when severe weather events result in closures or reduced hours
- Ability to support employees unable to work
- Does not change eligibility requirements or timelines for unemployment claims
- Number of states that have a waiting week
- Purpose of waiting week
- Reconciling when worksite and home are in different counties

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Oregon law requires people receiving regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits serve a waiting week. The waiting week is the first week of a person’s regular UI claim when they meet all eligibility requirements. They must claim the week, but they are not paid for it. The waiting week does not impact the number of weeks claimants receive in benefits or the total amount they may be paid. It does mean people need to wait until after the first week they are otherwise eligible for unemployment insurance benefits to get those benefits.

Currently, the Governor may waive the one-week waiting period required to be eligible to receive UI benefits, if the Governor has declared a state of emergency in accordance with ORS 401.165. In 2020, then-Governor Kate Brown declared an emergency and waived the waiting week during the pandemic so people were able to receive benefits the first week they filed a claim. After the expiration of that emergency declaration, Governor Brown waived the waiting week, through the duration of federal pandemic-related unemployment insurance programs.

House Bill 2125 permits the Director of the Oregon Employment Department to waive the unpaid waiting week period for unemployment insurance claimants who are unable to work as a result of state-declared emergency related to severe weather.