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June 11, 2021

The Honorable Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress
2371 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ken Buck
Member of Congress
2455 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lauren Boebert
Member of Congress
1609 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Lamborn, Buck, and Boebert,

Thank you for your recent letter regarding enhanced federal unemployment benefits. This is the first time I am hearing from some members of the delegation requesting that I end enhanced unemployment benefits in Colorado. Congress shouldn't be paying out these benefits if they do not want states to use it. If Colorado ended these benefits prematurely, it would harm individuals, business owners, and the broader economy. These funds have, and continue to, stimulate the economy and bring struggling businesses back from the brink.

We are focused on swiftly and effectively distributing millions in relief from federal stimulus received by the state and I appreciate the work of those in the federal delegation that sought to ensure Colorado received this much needed funding. If Congress would like to increase the flexibility on how Colorado could use the \$600-800 million that the state will currently receive as enhanced unemployment funds, Colorado would be interested in other uses, but it would be dumb for Colorado to simply send this money back to Washington.

Even though more Coloradans are returning to full-time work after this global pandemic, it doesn't mean their financial challenges are going to simply disappear. Colorado was one of the earlier states to reinstate the requirement that all unemployment beneficiaries must actively search for a job to qualify for benefits. Today, Coloradans who are out of work are actively looking for jobs across the state.

We also want to make sure that Coloradans are set up for success as they transition back into the workforce. We're thrilled that 7,953 claimants have already opted into the \$1200-\$1600 Colorado Jumpstart program as of June 7, 2021, with the number of enrollees increasing rapidly in recent weeks as Coloradans take advantage of funding that will help offset the significant costs of returning to work. From childcare to transportation, these funds are helping ease the transition

back into the workforce. I was in Glenwood Springs and Grand Junction this week and heard very positive things about how the bonuses have increased applications. Our Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) will be updating this number every Monday and publishing on its UI Daily Dashboard. I encourage the Colorado delegation to share the success of this program with their peers as they seek innovative ways to aid those affected by the pandemic in returning to the workforce.

CDLE reported for the week ending June 5th a total of 160,000 claimants received Unemployment Insurance, the lowest since the start of the pandemic. Since the pandemic began in the Spring of 2020, the Colorado Unemployment Insurance program has provided over \$9 billion dollars in benefits that has helped keep unemployed individuals financially afloat and provide consumer spending in the local communities in which they live.

It is important to note we are still working to get all Coloradans vaccinated, and vaccination availability is still fairly new for younger workers. Industries that have a historically higher composition of young workers may experience a harder time filling positions until more young workers are fully vaccinated. Limited childcare availability may also be a contributing factor as to why workers including women may not be able to return to the workforce at this time.

Colorado was in a skilled worker shortage in many industries with unemployment below 3% prior to the pandemic. It is unrealistic to expect that following a global pandemic and challenging economic environment that it would be like flipping a light switch, but we know the \$1200 - \$1600 incentive provided through the Jumpstart program is helping make sure that work is rewarded.

My Administration will continue to work with the delegation to help workers and businesses through this transitional period. Please do not hesitate to reach out to my office if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jared Polis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jared Polis
Governor