

CONGRESSMAN
CHUCK EDWARDS
REPRESENTING NORTH CAROLINA'S 11TH DISTRICT

September 13, 2023

Chairman Jason Smith
House Ways and Means
1139 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Member Day Hearing Testimony

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members, I want to thank you for providing me with this opportunity to speak on issues that are important to the citizens of North Carolina's 11th Congressional District, and issues that I believe are critical for the workforce of our nation.

Today, I would like to bring your attention to an issue with unemployment law that has played a role in the \$163 billion in unemployment fraud estimated by the Department of Labor since 2020, and something that continues to plague business leaders in my district.

In 2012, Congress established nationwide work search requirements for unemployment claimants. These requirements established the well-known mandate that a claimant must be able, available, and actively seeking work to be eligible for unemployment benefits. This provision has commonly been interpreted to mean a claimant must search for and accept work, but it leaves out the single most important part of a meaningful job search – interviewing for the job.

You see, many states conclude that if an unemployment claimant completes an application, that claimant has met the work search requirement; and if that claimant turns down work, they may no longer be eligible for unemployment benefits. The fault in this process is: If a claimant completes an application but does not appear for a job interview, then they cannot be offered a job to accept OR turn down.

I continue to hear from upset business owners who share their frustration with the constant scheduling of interviews only for an applicant to not show up. For one business in NC-11 and one position alone, they had 30 candidates apply *and* schedule an interview within a 60-day period, with only one candidate actually showing up to the interview. These no call, no show interviews are draining critical resources for small businesses and are undoubtedly linked to the unprecedented unemployment fraud we've seen over the last 3 years.

Another employer in my district asks job applicants whether they'd like an application or a job. If they simply want to fulfill their weekly work search requirement, the claimant is given a

yellow application and the employer knows not to waste their time with the applicant; but if the claimant actually wants a job, they receive another color application, so the employer knows to give them serious consideration for employment.

It's time we stand up for American small businesses and the integrity of our unemployment system. That's why I'm working on a bill to finally codify showing up to an interview as a mandatory part of the job search while on unemployment, and to strengthen audit requirements so that we can better prevent against the further abuse of our UI system.

As we approach the halfway point of the 118th Congress, I strongly encourage you to stand beside me for much-needed unemployment reforms to help more Americans experience the dignity of work and to help employers find the work force they so desperately need.

Lastly, I would be remiss not to take this opportunity to mention the importance of ensuring distressed census tracts, including Brownfields and Superfund sites, be included in any extension of the Tax Cut and Jobs Act Opportunity Zone tax incentive, especially the Rural Opportunity Zone tax incentive proposed in the recent American Families and Jobs Act tax package. Complex contamination footprints frequently leave Brownfields and Superfund sites, like the Ecusta Mill in my district, to sit undeveloped for decades. This vital inclusion of contaminated sites in any future Opportunity Zone programs will help to guarantee the tax incentive has the furthest reach possible and will achieve the goal of sparking economic development across *all* of the census tracts and rural communities that are in-need.

Thank you again for letting me testify before you today. I yield the remainder of my time.