



UAW Local 4121

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June 30, 2020

Dear Governor Inslee,

We are writing in support of the creation of a Washington Workers Fund for non-citizen populations who are facing financial hardship and are prevented from receiving state or federal assistance due to their visa or immigration status.

Our union represents over 6,000 Academic Student Employees and Postdoctoral Scholars at the University of Washington. Approximately 30% of our workforce are non-citizens: visa holders and undocumented students working on fixed-term appointments as instructors and researchers. We are proud to be doing cutting-edge work to respond to the pandemic: developing and administering diagnostic tests, researching potential treatments and vaccines, modeling how COVID-19 spreads, as well as studying how its impacts are disproportionately affecting Black and Brown communities. We have worked together to accommodate the strain of the pandemic on campus, but as many of us approach the end of our appointments we are facing desperate circumstances.

As you know, non-citizen students and University employees are often not eligible for unemployment insurance, CARES Act funding, or state health insurance. Many of us are prohibited from traveling home and immigration restrictions prevent many of us from working for any employer other than the University of Washington. Like many non-citizen populations, we have virtually no viable financial support options if we become unemployed.

Yet, non-citizens contribute hundreds of millions of dollars to the Washington State economy. NAFSA, the Association of International Educators, estimates that international students and scholars contribute upwards of \$950 million in Washington state alone, and support and create thousands of jobs. The Washington Budget and Policy Center estimates that undocumented Washingtonians contribute nearly equal amounts in state and local taxes, as well as the unemployment trust fund, and perform much of the frontline work that is critical to keeping our state running. Yet, these contributions are systematically denied if we become unemployed.

We know that the health and well-being of our entire state is at risk if any of us are at risk. We therefore wish to express our strong support for the creation of the Washington Workers Fund, along with many other allies who are centering the needs of non-citizens. Please take action now to dedicate \$100-million to this fund and work with caucus leadership to create a permanent system for wage-replacement protection for workers who lose their jobs and are excluded from the current unemployment insurance system.

Thank you for all you've done for our state and we look forward to your reply.

UAW Local 4121 International Solidarity Work Group

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