

Governor Cooper Provides Unemployment Help for Western NC (Including for Nonprofits)

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, many businesses and nonprofits in western North Carolina are being forced to make difficult decisions about whether to continue paying some or all of their employees. Many workers who are laid off or furloughed because of the hurricane will need to rely on government unemployment insurance (UI) benefits until they are re-employed. In response to these circumstances, Governor Roy Cooper **issued an executive order** on Wednesday making several temporary changes to unemployment benefits during the Hurricane Helene state of emergency, which currently extends through March 1, 2025. Governor Cooper's executive order makes three significant changes that should help nonprofits and their employees who have been affected by Hurricane Helene:

1. It temporarily increases weekly state unemployment benefits by \$250. This means that the maximum weekly benefits for people affected by Hurricane Helene will be \$600 through March 1, 2025.
2. It provides that employers will not be charged for the unemployment benefits that their employees receive due to Hurricane Helene through March 1, 2025. Notably, the Governor's executive order provides for non-charging of benefits for nonprofits that pay state unemployment taxes (SUTA) and for those that elect to reimburse the state for unemployment expenses instead of paying SUTA.
3. It waives work search requirements for people receiving unemployment benefits through March 1, 2025.

The North Carolina Council of State – the nine statewide elected officials other than the Governor – **voted unanimously to concur** with Governor Cooper's executive order on Wednesday, signaling that this temporary policy change has bipartisan support. The Center is appreciative of Governor Cooper for issuing this executive order to help many North Carolinians who are currently out of work due to Hurricane Helene. We are particularly appreciative that his executive order extends unemployment relief to *all* nonprofit employees who have been affected by Hurricane Helene and holds harmless *all* 501(c)(3) nonprofits whose employees are receiving these benefits.

In addition to receiving state unemployment benefits, people who are out of work in western North Carolina because of Hurricane Helene are also eligible for federal Disaster

Unemployment Assistance (DUA). These DUA benefits allow workers to receive up to 26 total weeks of unemployment benefits. Notably, DUA provides unemployment assistance to people who do not qualify for state unemployment benefits, including self-employed workers and employees of houses of worship and small nonprofits with fewer than four employees. Nonprofits whose employees receive DUA benefits are not charged for these benefits regardless of whether they pay SUTA or reimburse the state for unemployment claims.

In response to the questions we have received from nonprofits in western North Carolina about unemployment considerations related to Hurricane Helene - and recognizing that answers to several nonprofit-specific unemployment issues are not readily available online – the Center has published an [article with more information about state unemployment benefits and DUA for nonprofits affected by Hurricane Helene](#). We'll continue to update this article as we receive additional questions from nonprofits or as new information becomes available.