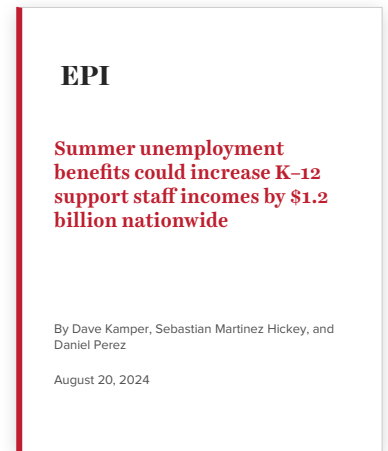


Summer unemployment benefits could increase K–12 support staff incomes by \$1.2 billion nationwide

Summary: Instead of punishing workers for wanting to serve in public schools, states should follow Minnesota’s lead by providing school support staff—who are disproportionately Black and brown, women, and older workers—with unemployment insurance benefits during the summer.



Read the full report
epi.org/281866

Key findings

- Adding to woefully low compensation and inadequate hours, school support staff must forgo months of income in the summer but are ineligible for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits.
- Minnesota extended summer UI eligibility to school support staff in 2023, which led to these workers receiving nearly \$40 million in unemployment benefits.
- If all 50 states enacted policies like Minnesota’s, school support staff incomes would increase by \$1.2 billion per year; this would prevent the significant drop off in income that occurs for many school support staff during the summer.
- Providing support staff with UI through the summer reduces incentives for these workers to find a different job, which can help with staff retention.

Why this matters

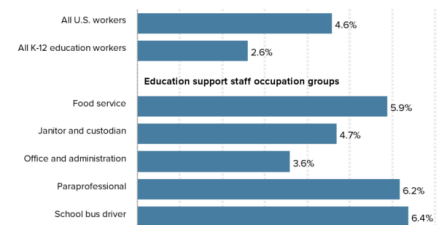
Extending summer unemployment benefits to school support staff is an easy way to help stabilize K–12 school staffing, improve learning environments for students, and provide economic security for this essential group of workers.

How to fix it

States should enact the same policy enacted by Minnesota in 2023, making school support staff eligible for unemployment insurance benefits in the summer. This policy would provide a meaningful supplement to these vital workers’ earnings, at a relatively trivial cost to the public.

Low wages mean most education support workers experience greater rates of poverty than other workers

Share of all workers, K–12 education workers, and education support staff workers who are in poverty



Source: EPI analysis of 2022–2023 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement data.

Economic Policy Institute