

By Senator McClain

9-00402-26

2026216__

A bill to be entitled
An act relating to verification of reemployment assistance benefit eligibility; providing a short title; amending s. 443.101, F.S.; revising circumstances under which the Department of Commerce disqualifies claimants from reemployment assistance benefits; creating s. 443.1112, F.S.; requiring the department to verify claimants' identities before paying benefits; requiring the department to cross-check certain information; providing duties of the department; requiring the department to maintain a web page for a specified purpose and to notify employers each year of the web page; providing annual reporting requirements; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. This act may be cited as the "Promoting Work, Deterring Fraud Act of 2026."

Section 2. Subsection (2) of section 443.101, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

443.101 Disqualification for benefits.—An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

(2) If the Department of Commerce finds that the individual has failed without good cause to apply for available suitable work, including contacting the required number of prospective employers per week for any week of unemployment claimed in the benefit year in accordance with s. 443.091, to appear on three or more occasions for a scheduled job interview without

9-00402-26

2026216__

30 notifying the prospective employer of the need to cancel or
31 reschedule the interview, to accept suitable work when offered
32 to him or her, to ~~or~~ return to the individual's customary self-
33 employment when directed by the department, or to return to
34 employment when recalled to work by the individual's employer
35 after a temporary layoff, the disqualification continues for the
36 next full period of unemployment ~~next ensuing~~ after he or she
37 failed without good cause to apply for available suitable work,
38 accept suitable work, or return to his or her customary
39 employment or self-employment, and until the individual has
40 earned income of at least 17 times his or her weekly benefit
41 amount. The department shall by rule adopt criteria to implement
42 this subsection, including for determining the "suitability of
43 work," or "suitable work," as used in this section. In
44 developing these rules, the department shall consider the
45 duration of a claimant's unemployment in determining the
46 suitability of work and the suitability of proposed rates of
47 compensation for available work. Further, after an individual
48 has received 25 weeks of benefits in a single year, suitable
49 work is a job that pays the minimum wage and is 120 percent or
50 more of the weekly benefit amount the individual is drawing.

51 (a) In determining whether ~~or not any~~ work is suitable for
52 an individual, the department shall consider the degree of risk
53 to the individual's health, safety, and morals; the individual's
54 physical fitness, prior training, experience, prior earnings,
55 length of unemployment, and prospects for securing local work in
56 his or her customary occupation; and the distance of the
57 available work from his or her residence.

58 (b) Notwithstanding ~~any other provisions of~~ this chapter,

9-00402-26

2026216__

work is not deemed suitable and benefits may not be denied to any otherwise eligible individual for refusing to accept new work under any of the following conditions:

1. The position offered is vacant due directly to a strike, lockout, or other labor dispute.

2. The wages, hours, or other conditions of the work offered are substantially less favorable to the individual than those prevailing for similar work in the locality.

3. As a condition of being employed, the individual is required to join a company union or to resign from or refrain from joining any bona fide labor organization.

(c) If the department finds that an individual was rejected for offered employment as the direct result of a positive, confirmed drug test required as a condition of employment, the individual is disqualified for refusing to accept an offer of suitable work.

Section 3. Section 443.1112, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

443.1112 Verification of reemployment assistance benefit eligibility; detection of fraud.-

(1) The Department of Commerce shall verify the identity of each claimant who applies for reemployment assistance benefits before paying any benefits to that individual.

(2) For the initial claim for benefits made by a claimant and as necessary to verify a claimant's eligibility for benefits, the department shall cross-check the information contained in the claim with information in the database of the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements Program established by the United States Bureau of Citizenship and

9-00402-26

2026216__

88 Immigration Services.

89 (3) For every 2 weeks that a claimant makes a claim for
90 benefits, including the initial claim for benefits, to verify a
91 claimant's eligibility for benefits, the department shall cross-
92 check the information contained in the claim to make sure that
93 the claimant is:

94 (a) Living.

95 (b) Not incarcerated.

96 (c) Not already employed.

97 (4) The department shall do all of the following:

98 (a) Investigate any claim in this state associated with a
99 mailing address, a bank account, an e-mail address, a telephone
100 number, or an Internet protocol address that is also associated
101 with another existing claim for reemployment assistance benefits
102 in this state or another state and verify that the claim in this
103 state is legitimate and not fraudulent before paying any
104 benefits for the claim.

105 (b) Scrutinize any claim in this state filed from a foreign
106 Internet protocol address before paying any benefits for the
107 claim.

108 (c) Work with the United States Department of Labor, the
109 United States Department of Justice, other state workforce
110 agencies, the Department of Law Enforcement, the state
111 attorneys, or the Office of the Statewide Prosecutor to share
112 information related to fraudulent claims or attempted fraudulent
113 claims to the extent feasible for further investigation and
114 proceedings brought under this chapter.

115 (d) Maintain a web page through which an individual or an
116 employer may report known or suspected violations of this

9-00402-26

2026216__

chapter, including identity theft or fraud. Each year, the department shall notify employers in this state of this web page for reporting violations.

(e) Each year, make available on its website a report identifying the number of fraudulent reemployment assistance claims identified for the previous year, the number of claims not paid due to successful detection of fraudulent intentions, the number of claims and the amount of reemployment assistance benefits paid against claims subsequently identified as fraudulent, the amount of fraudulent overpayments recovered, and the number of fraudulent claims referred for investigation and possible prosecution. The report must also list the sources of information which were used to cross-check claims during the reporting period.

Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.