

HONORING THE MEMORY OF
DONALD J. COHEN, M.D.

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 4, 2001

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with great sadness, in a time of national sadness, to pay tribute to an extraordinary man. Dr. Donald Cohen was a friend of the New Haven community and friend of mine. He left an indelible mark on all he touched and a legacy that will touch many he never knew.

For almost thirty years, he brought an unparalleled dedication to the Yale School of Medicine. Most recently he served as the Chairman of Child Psychiatry at the Yale-New Haven Children's Hospital and was the Sterling Professor of Child Psychiatry, Pediatrics and Psychology in the Yale School of Medicine. Donald has been the Director of the Yale Child Study Center, internationally renowned for its multi-disciplinary programs and advocacy for children and families, for nearly two decades. Under his leadership, the Center has grown to be one of the most respected research and development institutions in the world. Within the Center, Donald also founded the very successful Yale-New Haven Child Development Community Policing Program which helped teach law enforcement officers how to respond to children and families. The program has since been duplicated in communities throughout the country.

In a letter I recently received from Donald, he wrote, "the Child Study Center has been at the core of my intellectual and personal development. All of my work has been nourished by relationships that are based here . . . the coming together of so many wonderful people who gathered around the visions of the future directions and potentials of our field." Donald dedicated his career to helping children with very special needs. He has been recognized nationally and internationally for his work in urban child development and the impact of violence and trauma on children and families. However, it was his clinical and research activities which focused on the developmental psychopathology of serious childhood neuropsychiatric disorders including pervasive developmental and tic disorders and autism that were closest to his heart. It was here that he truly wanted to make a difference.

Over the last several years, I worked on so many projects with the Yale Child Study Center, and almost always worked closely with Donald. Since our first meeting, I was in awe of his tireless efforts and dedication—especially to his research on autism. It was only this past week that I received the news that he would be honored next month at the International Meeting for Autism Research with the Lifetime Award for Research in Autism. In his letter, he described this occasion as "particularly special . . . because they bring together what I have most cherished what I have most cherished about my life as a scholar and a clinician—the opportunity to be a part of family's lives and the lives of students and colleagues working together to improve our understanding of the most enduring questions of human development."

I stand today to pay tribute to a great man and to extend my deepest sympathies to his wife Phyllis, his four children and their families, and his mother Rose. A tireless advocate and a dear friend, Dr. Donald Cohen was an inspiring leader and his legacy will forever live in the hearts of the many lives he has touched.

STATEMENT ON THE TEMPORARY
UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION
(TUC) ACT

HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 4, 2001

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, as our economy enters a period of great uncertainty, Congress can take at least one step that will protect the families most imperiled by mounting job losses, while simultaneously stimulating consumer demand and economic growth. In short, we should improve our unemployment compensation (UC) system. Expanding, extending and supplementing UC coverage will put more money into the pockets of the families most affected by economic dislocations and most likely to spend quickly.

I am therefore introducing the Temporary Unemployment Compensation Act to improve our Nation's response to rising unemployment levels. The bill would draw down funds from the federal unemployment accounts for one year to: (1) provide benefits to certain unemployed workers who are now not covered by the Unemployment Compensation system; (2) extend benefits by 13 weeks to workers whose regular UC has expired; and (3) supplement the amount of unemployment benefits. Over the next year, these provisions would provide UC benefits to over one million jobless Americans who otherwise would go without any assistance, they would extend UC coverage to roughly 3 million individuals whose regular benefits have expired, and they would increase the amount of unemployment payments to 9 million displaced workers. With new claims for unemployment benefits recently reaching their highest level in nine years, it is imperative that Congress and the Administration consider these reforms in the quickest possible time frame.

Any effort to improve our unemployment system must start with the recognition that many dislocated workers, particularly low-wage workers, do not receive assistance from the current system when they are laid off. The General Accounting Office (GAO) reported last December that while low-wage workers were twice as likely to become unemployed, they were only half as likely to receive UC benefits compared to higher-wage workers, even when employed for similar periods of time. The GAO cited the fact that only 18% of unemployed low-wage workers were receiving UI benefits compared to 40% of higher-wage workers. This problem may track a general reduction in the percentage of unemployed Americans who actually receive UC benefits (which has declined over the last few decades from about one-half to about one-third).

Over the last few years, Congress has received repeated recommendations to correct

this situation. Groups suggesting changes include: the Advisory Council on Unemployment Compensation, which was jointly appointed by Congress and the President; the Committee for Economic Development, which is led by leaders in business and academia; and a group of state, federal, business and labor stakeholders in the UC system. All of these organizations highlighted two issues that must be addressed. First, too many unemployed workers are denied UC because their most recent wages are not counted. (Many States do not count the last completed quarter of work). And second, part-time workers are sometimes discriminated against in the UC system. To begin to address these inequities, the TUC Act would provide federally-funded UC coverage for one year to jobless workers who would be otherwise ineligible because their last completed quarter of employment was not included in their wage record, and to unemployed workers seeking part-time employment.

As unemployment creeps up, it becomes increasingly difficult for dislocated workers to quickly find new jobs. For this reason, Congress also should consider increasing the duration of unemployment benefits, particularly since the current law provision providing an extension of benefits has proven ineffective. In fact, since 1983, only 12 States have triggered on to the current Extended Benefits (EB) program. Because changes to the existing EB program would demand time-consuming changes to many State's laws, this legislation would establish a new, temporary program that would provide an additional 13 weeks of benefits to individuals whose regular UC expires. Like the coverage for certain newly eligible workers, these extended benefits would be federally-funded and would continue requirements that recipients seek work.

One final area that deserves attention is the adequacy of UC benefits. Unemployment benefits generally replace 50% or less of lost wages, leaving many workers hard-pressed to meet their monthly bills. This is particularly true in many urban and suburban areas where housing costs have exceeded inflation over the last decade. Furthermore, many States have relatively low average and maximum UC payment rates (the average weekly UC payment in the US is about \$230). Finally, UC wage replacement rates were never adjusted to account for the fact that unemployment benefits were made fully taxable in 1986. This tax policy was enacted to ensure equity among families with the same amount income but from different sources. However, it has had the effect of reducing the value of UC benefits by about 15%. Therefore, to restore the value of unemployment benefits, while also maintaining equity in the tax code, this legislation would increase every UC recipient's weekly check by 15% for the next year.

Mr. Speaker, we have over \$38 billion in the Federal Unemployment Trust Funds. Those reserves are designed just for this purpose—responding to rising unemployment. We should spend a portion of those funds to help Americans face the uncertainties and hardships that come with increased joblessness. The Temporary Unemployment Compensation Act will put those monies to good use by expanding, extending and increasing unemployment coverage just when it is needed most. Thank you.