

- SUBJECT:** Removing certain unemployment benefit disqualifications
- COMMITTEE:** Business and Industry — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 8 ayes — C. Turner, Hefner, Crockett, Lambert, Ordaz Perez, Patterson, Shine, S. Thompson
- 1 nay — Cain
- WITNESSES:** For — Jonathan Lewis, Every Texan; Rene Lara, Texas AFL-CIO; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Jason Sabo, Children at Risk; Maggie Stern, Children's Defense Fund Texas; Jennifer Toon, Coalition of Texans with Disabilities; Elizabeth Colvin, RAISE Texas; David Feigen, Texans Care for Children; Ann Baddour, Texas Appleseed; Ashley Harris, United Ways of Texas; Thomas Parkinson)
- Against — None
- On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Chris Oakley, Texas Workforce Commission)
- BACKGROUND:** Labor Code sec. 207.046 specifies certain instances of involuntary separation that will not disqualify an individual from receiving unemployment benefits, including protection from family violence or stalking, or to provide care for a terminally ill spouse.
- DIGEST:** HB 3697 would establish that an individual was not disqualified for unemployment benefits if the individual left the workplace to care for the individual's minor child due to an unexpected illness, accident, or other unforeseeable event, but only if no reasonable, alternative care were available.
- The bill would take effect September 1, 2021, and would apply only to a claim for unemployment compensation benefits filed with the Texas Workforce Commission on or after that date.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** HB 3697 would help address the current needs of working families with children in Texas by allowing eligibility for unemployment benefits for an individual who had to leave work to care for a minor child after an unexpected and unforeseeable event. Under current law, an individual is not disqualified from receiving unemployment compensation benefits in certain instances of involuntary separation. HB 3697 would extend the current law to prohibit disqualification of certain applicants for unemployment benefits if they involuntarily leave the workplace to care for their minor child.

Unemployment assistance can help struggling citizens weather a crisis until they can get back on their feet and into the workforce, which is a proper role for the Texas government to take on in limited circumstances. HB 3697 would limit eligibility for its modified unemployment benefits by requiring that the event prompting an individual to involuntarily leave their work be unforeseeable and unexpected and that no reasonable alternative care was available, ensuring that the government's role in providing benefits was limited to individuals with virtually no other options.

**CRITICS SAY:** HB 3697 would expand access to unemployment benefits for certain individuals, which is not the proper role for government.