

House File 19 - Introduced

HOUSE FILE 19

BY HUNTER

A BILL FOR

1 An Act prohibiting employment discrimination based on
2 unemployment status and providing remedies.
3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

1 Section 1. FINDINGS — PURPOSE.

2 1. The general assembly finds that denial of employment
3 opportunities to individuals because of their status as
4 unemployed is discriminatory and burdens commerce by doing one
5 or more of the following:

6 a. Reducing personal consumption and undermining economic
7 stability and growth.

8 b. Squandering human capital essential to the state's
9 economic vibrancy and growth.

10 c. Increasing demands for unemployment insurance benefits,
11 reducing unemployment trust fund assets, and leading to higher
12 payroll taxes for employers, or cuts in unemployment insurance
13 benefits for jobless workers, or both.

14 d. Imposing additional burdens on publicly funded health
15 and welfare programs.

16 e. Decreasing income, property, and other tax revenues that
17 the states and local governments rely on to support operations
18 and institutions essential to commerce.

19 2. The purposes of this Act are all of the following:

20 a. To prohibit employers and employment agencies from
21 disqualifying an individual from employment opportunities
22 because of that individual's status as unemployed.

23 b. To prohibit employers and employment agencies from
24 publishing or posting any advertisement or announcement for
25 an employment opportunity that indicates that an individual's
26 status as unemployed disqualifies that individual for the
27 opportunity.

28 c. To eliminate the burdens imposed on commerce due to the
29 exclusion of such individuals from employment.

30 Sec. 2. Section 216.2, Code 2019, is amended by adding the
31 following new subsection:

32 NEW SUBSECTION. 14A. "*Status as unemployed*" means that an
33 individual, at the time of application for employment or at the
34 time of action alleged to violate this chapter, does not have a
35 job, is available for work, and is searching for work.

1 Sec. 3. Section 216.2, subsection 15, Code 2019, is amended
2 to read as follows:

3 15. *“Unfair practice”* or *“discriminatory practice”* means
4 those practices specified as unfair or discriminatory in
5 sections 216.6, 216.6A, 216.6B, 216.7, 216.8, 216.8A, 216.9,
6 216.10, 216.11, and 216.11A.

7 Sec. 4. NEW SECTION. 216.6B **Additional unfair or**
8 **discriminatory practice — unemployment status discrimination in**
9 **employment.**

10 1. It shall be an unfair or discriminatory practice for an
11 employer to do any of the following:

12 a. Publish in print, on the internet, or in any other
13 medium, an advertisement or announcement for an employee for
14 any job that includes any of the following:

15 (1) Any provision stating or indicating that an
16 individual’s status as unemployed disqualifies the individual
17 for any employment opportunity.

18 (2) Any provision stating or indicating that the employer
19 will not consider or hire an individual for any employment
20 opportunity based on that individual’s status as unemployed.

21 b. Fail or refuse to consider for employment, or fail or
22 refuse to hire, an individual as an employee because of the
23 individual’s status as unemployed.

24 c. Direct or request that an employment agency take an
25 individual’s status as unemployed into account to disqualify
26 an applicant for consideration, screening, or referral for
27 employment.

28 2. It shall be an unfair or discriminatory practice for an
29 employment agency to do any of the following:

30 a. Publish in print, on the internet, or in any other
31 medium, an advertisement or announcement for any vacancy in
32 a job, to be filled by an employee, that includes any of the
33 following:

34 (1) Any provision stating or indicating that an
35 individual’s status as unemployed disqualifies the individual

1 for any employment opportunity.

2 (2) Any provision stating or indicating that the employment
3 agency or an employer will not consider or hire an individual
4 for any employment opportunity based on that individual's
5 status as unemployed.

6 b. Screen, fail or refuse to consider, or fail or refuse to
7 refer an individual for employment because of the individual's
8 status as unemployed.

9 c. Limit, segregate, or classify any individual in any
10 manner that would limit or tend to limit the individual's
11 access to information about jobs, or consideration, screening,
12 or referral for jobs, solely because of an individual's status
13 as unemployed.

14 3. This section shall not be construed to preclude an
15 employer or employment agency from considering an individual's
16 employment history, or from examining the reasons underlying
17 an individual's status as unemployed, in assessing an
18 individual's ability to perform a job or in otherwise
19 making employment decisions about that individual. Such
20 consideration or examination may include an assessment of
21 whether an individual's employment history in a similar or
22 related job for a period of time reasonably proximate to the
23 time of consideration of the individual for new employment is
24 job-related or consistent with business necessity in relation
25 to that new employment.

26 Sec. 5. Section 216.15, subsection 9, paragraph a, Code
27 2019, is amended by adding the following new subparagraph:

28 NEW SUBPARAGRAPH. (10) For an unfair or discriminatory
29 practice relating to unemployment status discrimination
30 pursuant to section 216.6B, payment to the complainant of
31 damages for an injury caused by the unfair or discriminatory
32 practice which damages shall include but are not limited to
33 actual damages, court costs, reasonable attorney fees, and any
34 of the following, if applicable:

35 (a) For an unfair or discriminatory practice relating to

1 unemployment status discrimination pursuant to section 216.6B,
2 subsection 1, paragraph "a", or subsection 2, paragraph "a",
3 damages in an amount not to exceed one thousand dollars for
4 each day the unfair or discriminatory practice occurs.

5 (b) For an unfair or discriminatory practice relating to
6 unemployment status discrimination pursuant to section 216.6B,
7 subsection 1, paragraph "b" or "c", or subsection 2, paragraph
8 "b" or "c", if wages, salary, employment benefits, or other
9 compensation have not been denied or lost to the individual,
10 damages in an amount not to exceed five thousand dollars.

11 EXPLANATION

12 The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with
13 the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

14 This bill prohibits employment discrimination based on
15 an individual's status as unemployed. The bill defines
16 "status as unemployed" as an individual who, at the time
17 of application for employment or at the time of an alleged
18 violation, does not have a job, is available for work, and
19 is searching for work. The Iowa civil rights commission is
20 charged with administration of the bill via existing procedures
21 for employment discrimination complaints.

22 The bill prohibits an employer from engaging in certain
23 unfair or discriminatory employment practices. An employer is
24 prohibited from publishing an advertisement or announcement
25 for employment that includes any provision stating that an
26 individual's status as unemployed disqualifies the individual
27 for any employment opportunity or any provision stating that
28 the employer will not consider or hire an individual for any
29 employment opportunity based on that individual's status as
30 unemployed. An employer is prohibited from failing or refusing
31 to consider for employment or failing or refusing to hire an
32 individual because of the individual's status as unemployed.
33 An employer is prohibited from directing or requesting that an
34 employment agency take an individual's status as unemployed
35 into account to disqualify an applicant for consideration,

1 screening, or referral for employment.

2 The bill also prohibits an employment agency from engaging
3 in certain unfair or discriminatory employment practices.
4 An employment agency is prohibited from publishing an
5 advertisement or announcement for any vacancy in a job that
6 includes any provision stating that an individual's status
7 as unemployed disqualifies the individual for any employment
8 opportunity or any provision stating that the employment agency
9 or an employer will not consider or hire an individual for any
10 employment opportunity based on that individual's status as
11 unemployed. An employment agency is prohibited from screening,
12 or failing or refusing to consider, or failing or refusing to
13 refer an individual for employment because of the individual's
14 status as unemployed. An employment agency is prohibited from
15 limiting, segregating, or classifying an individual in any
16 manner that would limit the individual's access to information
17 about jobs, or consideration, screening, or referral for jobs
18 solely because of the individual's status as unemployed.

19 The bill provides that a prevailing complainant is entitled
20 to damages including but not limited to actual damages; court
21 costs; reasonable attorney fees; for a violation relating to
22 publication of an advertisement or announcement for employment,
23 up to \$1,000 for each day the violation occurs; and for
24 any other violation, if wages, salary, employment benefits,
25 or other compensation have not been denied or lost to the
26 complainant, up to \$5,000.

27 The bill is not to be construed to preclude an employer
28 or employment agency from considering an individual's
29 employment history, or from examining the reasons underlying
30 an individual's status as unemployed, in assessing an
31 individual's ability to perform a job or in otherwise making
32 employment decisions about that individual. Such consideration
33 or examination may include an assessment of whether an
34 individual's employment history in a similar or related job
35 for a period of time reasonably proximate to the time of

1 consideration for new employment is job-related or consistent
2 with business necessity in relation to that new employment.