As a Peoria Area's business community member, I am asking for an extension of policy that would exempt unemployment benefit claims from affecting the employer's contribution rate for layoffs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 has not been eradicated. Businesses across all industries have been forced to lay off and terminate employees due to the disease-mandated mitigations beyond the employers' control. If the Illinois General Assembly takes no action to extend this policy, businesses' contribution rates will increase.

The Illinois General Assembly exempted COVID-19 layoffs and terminations from affecting a business's contribution rate through December 31, 2020. We call for this policy to be extended another year **through December 2021**. Further, we ask that the policy applies retroactively to those layoffs that occurred starting January 1, 2020.

This call to action is part of a platform that joins the Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce and Chambers All In for Economic Recovery initiative. Businesses have shouldered much of the economic burden from the pandemic. Economic recovery for companies must be a priority now and, in the years, to come to continue to grow Illinois' economy.

Sincerely,