



GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY  
LANSING

SUSAN CORBIN  
DIRECTOR

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** February 29, 2024

**TO:** Honorable Brinks, Senate Majority Leader  
Honorable Nesbitt, Senate Minority Leader  
Honorable Tate, House Speaker of the House  
Honorable Hall, House Minority Leader

**FROM:** Julia Dale, Director  
Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency  
Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity

**SUBJECT:** Unemployment Insurance Agency Advocacy Program Report 2023

Attached is the Unemployment Insurance Agency annual Advocacy Program report for 2023, pursuant to PA 226 of 1989, Section 5a of the Michigan Employment Security Act.

The unemployment agency shall make an annual report to the legislature on the operation of the advocacy program. Each report must include the following for the previous 12-month period:

- (a) Number and type of claimants served.
- (b) Number and type of employers served.
- (c) Costs to the program of the claimants served.
- (d) Costs to the program of the employers served.
- (e) An analysis of the impact of the services provided on the appeal system provided by this act.

Should you have any questions regarding this report or need additional information please contact Rachael Wineland, UIA Legislative Liaison at [Winelandr@michigan.gov](mailto:Winelandr@michigan.gov) or 517-290-3053.

cc: Members - Michigan Senate Members - Michigan House of Representatives

## Unemployment Insurance Agency Advocacy Program

### 2023 Annual Report

The Advocacy Program was created by the enactment of Public Act 226 of 1989, which added Section 5a to the Michigan Employment Security Act (MES Act). The Advocacy Program's purpose is to provide information, consultation, and representation services to the unemployed workers (claimants) and the employers who request assistance as an appeal to an administrative law judge. The Advocacy Program began providing services in 1991 and since then, over 260,508 customer cases have been opened and closed.

The appropriation for this program is \$1.5 million. The law requires that a maximum of 60% (\$900,000) of the appropriation be used for claimant representation and a maximum of 40% (\$600,000) of the appropriation be used for employer representation.

- A. During CY 2023, 2,266 claimant cases were provided advocacy services.
- B. During CY 2023, 1,993 employers were provided advocacy services.
- C. The program expenditures incurred to serve claimants totaled \$342,935.00 which is 22.86% of that allotted portion of the appropriation.
- D. The program expenditures incurred to serve employers totaled \$285,480.00 which is 19.03% of that allotted portion of the appropriation.
- E. The total number of advocacy cases increased from 2022 to 2023. There has been an increase in cases heard due to the decrease in the Agency's backlog, the enhancement of the Agency's website which includes a video to help promote awareness of the Advocacy program, and social media exposure with the program. The number of claimant cases increased by approximately 40.52% from the previous year, as did the number of employers receiving services increased by approximately 57.85%. It is expected employers and claimants will continue to seek advocacy services and assistance with representation for their hearings.

The advocates provide eligible customers with a consultation and representation. During a consultation, the advocate is required to discuss the issue(s) involved, review documentation, and help the customer determine if witnesses are necessary for the hearing. The advocate also explains the hearing process and what to expect during the hearing. As a result, the parties are better prepared to present their case.

The Advocacy Program does not provide representation services at the hearing if the advocate determines the case lacks merit. The advocate determines if the appeal has merit based on a reasonable application of the MES Act and precedent case law. If after consulting with the customer the advocate determines that the case lacks merit, the advocate must advise the customer accordingly. At times, claimants and employers decide to withdraw their appeal after consulting with an advocate. This helps to reduce the number of hearings before the administrative law judges.

Due to a successful recruiting campaign in 2022, the Advocacy Program contracted six additional claimant advocates. To increase the visibility of the Advocacy Program, the program continues to utilize the [helpful video developed to promote the program](#). This video enhances UIA staff knowledge of the program and increases public awareness of the benefits of the Advocacy Program. The video is available on various social media platforms. The [program website](#) provides additional information regarding the services available to our external customers. Interested customers can contact the Advocacy Program at 800-638-3994.