



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
LANSING

SUSAN CORBIN
DIRECTOR

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 27, 2026

TO: Honorable Winnie Brinks, Senate Majority Leader
Honorable Aric Nesbitt, Senate Minority Leader
Honorable Matt Hall, Speaker of the House
Honorable Ranjeev Puri, House Minority Leader

FROM: Jason Palmer, Director
Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency Department
of Labor and Economic Opportunity

SUBJECT: Unemployment Insurance Advocacy Program Report 2025

Attached is the Unemployment Insurance Agency annual Advocacy Program report for 2025, consistent with Section 5a of the Michigan Employment Security Act, MCL 421.5a. It states as follows:

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 Andrew Crane, UIA Legislative Liaison, at CraneA3@michigan.gov or 517-243-9778.

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

Unemployment Insurance Agency Advocacy Program 2025 Annual Report

The Advocacy Program was created by 1989 Public Act 226, which added Section 5a to the Michigan Employment Security Act (MES Act), MCL 421.5a, effective December 21, 1989. 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. **1,791** claimants were provided with advocacy services in 2025.
- b. **2,078** employers were provided with advocacy services in 2025.
- c. The program expenditures incurred to serve claimants totaled **\$359,230.00, which is 23.95%** of that allotted portion of the appropriation.
- d. The program expenditures incurred to serve employers totaled **\$388,260.00, which is 25.88%** of that allotted portion of the appropriation.
- e. Analysis of the impact of the services provided on the appeal system provided by this act:

The total number of advocacy cases decreased from 2024 to 2025. The number of claimant cases decreased by approximately 19.73% from the previous year. The number of employers receiving services decreased by approximately 6.83%. It is expected employers and claimants will continue to seek Advocacy Services and assistance with representation for their hearings.

Advocates provide eligible customers with both consultation and representation services. During the consultation, the advocate thoroughly discusses the issues involved in the case, carefully reviews all relevant documentation, and assists the customer in determining whether witnesses are necessary to support their position at the hearing. The advocate also explains the hearing process in detail, including applicable procedures, roles of the participants, and what the customer can expect before, during, and after the hearing. Through this preparation, customers gain a clearer understanding of their rights and responsibilities, feel more confident in presenting their case, and are better equipped to effectively participate in the hearing process.

The Advocacy Program does not provide representation at a hearing when the advocate determines that an appeal lacks merit. The advocate makes this determination by applying the Michigan Employment Security (MES) Act and relevant precedent case law in a reasonable and objective manner. After thoroughly reviewing the facts of the case and consulting with the customer, the advocate evaluates whether the legal and factual issues support proceeding with the appeal. If the advocate concludes that the appeal lacks merit, they are required to inform the customer of this determination and explain the basis for it. In many instances, after receiving this guidance, claimants or employers choose to voluntarily withdraw their appeal. This process helps ensure that only viable cases proceed to hearing, promotes efficient use of program resources, and contributes to reducing the number of hearings scheduled before administrative law judges.

To increase the visibility and outreach of the Advocacy Program, the program continues to utilize a professionally developed promotional video designed to highlight the services and benefits offered. This video serves as an effective educational tool for both internal and external audiences by enhancing UIA staff knowledge of the program and increasing public awareness of the Advocacy Program's role in assisting

customers. The video is widely accessible and available across multiple social media platforms, allowing the program to reach a broad and diverse audience.

In addition to the video, the Advocacy Program website provides comprehensive information about the services available to external customers, including eligibility criteria, program processes, and contact details. Customers interested in receiving assistance are encouraged to contact the Advocacy Program directly at 800-638-3994 for further information or to request services.

To support ongoing communication and professional development, the program also publishes a quarterly Advocacy Newsletter. The newsletter provides advocates with timely UIA updates, instructional guides, and best practice resources, helping ensure consistent service delivery and keeping advocates informed of policy changes, procedural updates, and program initiatives.

LEO is an equal opportunity employer/program.

Auxiliary aids, services and other reasonable accommodations are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.
320 SOUTH WALNUT STREET, LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909 · www.michigan.gov/leo · 517-241-6712