***This sample letter to the editor requires customization. Edit the bold, italicized text below with your own personal experience, and remove this paragraph, before sending to your local newspaper. Also include your contact information. Many newspapers will only print a letter to the editor after calling the author to verify his or her identity and address. Newspapers don’t give out your contact info or address, but they will usually include your name and city if your letter is published.***

Dear [Newspaper Name] Editor,

In 2013, our leaders gutted the state’s unemployment system, taking it from average among the states to the worst in the country. As we watch the horizon for signs of a new recession, jobseekers in North Carolina are left balancing the stress of looking for a new job with the stress of trying to make ends meet. Working families deserve better than chump change, especially when facing an unexpected job loss through no fault of their own.

***This paragraph can be customized to talk about the need to improve our UI system and/or tell your story. Facts and stories help tell our future leaders why we urgently need a robust UI program and shows others that they’re not alone. Some prompts are below:***

* ***Before 2013, North Carolina used to be on par with other states in offering UI benefits for 26 weeks. Now, our state only offers 12 weeks of benefits, even though many people aren’t able to find employment within that timeframe. When I was searching for a job…***
* ***North Carolina’s maximum  weekly unemployment benefit amount  is a mere $350. But our state’s maximum benefit used to be $550. That’s a big difference for families dealing with job loss and raising that maximum benefit amount would allow many jobseekers to better make ends meet while navigating the job search.***
* Our state economy is losing $1.57 billion each year because of our lackluster unemployment system. As a business owner, I feel supporting our unemployment system is important because…
* ***Improving our state’s UI system will also make for a more racially just North Carolina. Black working people are more likely to face unemployment than white working people for a number of reasons related to structural racism. Yet Black jobseekers are only half as likely to receive unemployment benefits as white jobseekers. It’s shameful that anyone in our communities is forced to go without a safety net during a time of stress or uncertainty. We must do better.***

Unemployment benefits help working families navigate unexpected job loss to ensure bills can get paid and food can go on the table. Our elected leaders can’t view unemployment insurance as expendable. Ask them to commit to improving this vital program so everyone has a fair chance at getting back on their feet.

Sincerely,

[Your Name, City, Contact information]