# CASE STUDY

Fixing New York's Unemployment Insurance Crisis

## OVERVIEW

During the COVID-19 pandemic, over a million New Yorkers lost their jobs at no fault of their own. Paying unemployment insurance (UI) resulted in the unemployment trust fund going into more than $10 billion of debt to the federal government. Employers traditionally pay this debt, and this unprecedented amount led to a crisis for New York businesses.

Seeing the need for action, Upstate United (UU) spearheaded a call to state lawmakers and leaders in the fall of 2021 with its first "Troubling Trends" fact sheet detailing the potential $9 billion increase for employers across the state. From that point, UU developed messaging around the need for the state to intervene and use untapped federal funds to provide UI relief to struggling businesses. UU persisted with data-based messaging on its social media platforms, as well as through press conferences, traditional media and earned media. By coordinating with partner organizations, UU was able to gain attention from state leaders, including the New York State Comptroller and prominent members of the Legislature.

From 2021 to 2025, Upstate United and like-minded counterparts rallied around the need to provide relief to New York businesses.

## MESSAGING

Request for relief for New York businesses and employers affected by the multi-billion-dollar Unemployment Insurance costs, accompanied by federal and state data.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

This issue impacted numerous businesses represented by Upstate United, so it was crucial that they were informed of the advocacy efforts underway and assured that their voices were being heard. Additionally, it was essential to gain attention from state leaders, including the Governor, members of the Legislature, the New York State Comptroller, and the Commissioner of the Department of Labor, among others. Their support and action was necessary for success.

## TACTICS

- Legislative Meetings
- Collaboration with like-minded organizations
- Press Conferences
- Opinion Pieces
- Statements/Press Releases
- Earned Media
- Social Media
- Graphics
- Fact-Based One-Pagers

## CONCLUSION

Following a multi-year fight to provide critical relief, the enacted State Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget included $8 billion to eliminate the Unemployment Trust Fund debt. Paying back the debt owed to the federal government helps to lower rates and eliminate interest payments that businesses had to pay into the UI system. A significant victory for businesses and business owners from across New York State