



September 8, 2017

Commissioner Shawntera Hardy
MN Dept. of Employment & Economic
Development
1st National Bank Building
332 Minnesota Street, Suite E200
St. Paul, MN 55101

UI Director Rick Caligiuri
MN Dept. of Employment & Economic
Development
1st National Bank Building
332 Minnesota Street, Suite E200
St. Paul, MN 55101

Dear Commissioner Hardy and Director Caligiuri:

On August 29, local media reported that Julius DeRoma, owner of Club Jäger in Minneapolis donated \$500 to David Duke's United States Senate campaign last October. This report that a local business owner actively supported a well-known white supremacist caused an immediate uproar locally and beyond. Within days, the story received national attention, musical acts announced they would no longer perform at Club Jäger, and many employees at Club Jäger decided they could not in good conscience continue work for someone who supports such a racist ideology.

We are writing you today to encourage the Department of Employment and Economic Development to faithfully administer the law and honor requests by former employees of Club Jäger for unemployment benefits. Unemployment benefits, as you well know, are generally unavailable to workers who voluntarily quit their jobs. Minnesota statute, however, provides numerous exceptions to this general rule, which are designed to protect workers while maintaining the integrity of our UI system. Longstanding law contains exceptions for workers who quit their employment because of a serious illness, domestic abuse, stalking, the loss of child care, or to relocate with their spouse. Further, an exception that has been on the books for 60 years allows workers to remain eligible for unemployment benefits when they quit employment for a *good reason*. This particular exception is specifically limited in statute to entail reasons that are 1) directly related to employment and for which the employer is responsible, 2) adverse to the worker, and 3) would compel an average, reasonable worker to quit rather than remain in the job.

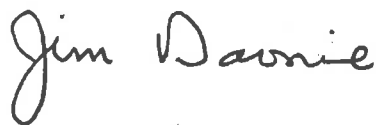
The situation at Club Jäger clearly meets this threshold. Aside from the indignity of working for an owner who supports white supremacy, the working conditions at Club Jäger became untenable after the Duke story was released. Employees report receiving threatening phone calls at the club, and even being threatened and taunted on the street when recognized as a Club Jäger employee. Moreover, the media reports actually led to white supremacists becoming customers at Club Jäger in order to show support for Mr. DeRoma and his contributions to Duke.



Staying on the job would require employees to endure nothing less than to work for an owner who supports white supremacy. It could require them to serve countless groups of white supremacists who are drawn to Club Jäger for its notoriety as bar that is sympathetic to racists, white supremacists and Nazi's. Further, it would compel employees to withstand threats from members of the public who are outraged by Mr. DeRoma's support for racism. No one should be expected to continue to work in such a hostile and dysfunctional environment. At a minimum, workers who left Club Jäger for a principled, legitimate and humane reason should be able to collect unemployment benefits if they are unable to find new jobs.

While it is impossible for legislators to predict the specific situations that will arise when we pass a piece of legislation, the exceptions in Minn.Stat. 268.095 are clearly intended to apply to situations like the one encountered by the workers at Club Jäger. These workers are not out to game the UI system, but are simply hard-working Minnesotans who made the same decision all of us would have made in that situation. Our laws, including the exceptions in Minn.Stat. 268.095, are intended to protect people like this.

We, the undersigned, strongly encourage DEED to approve applications for UI benefits sought by the former employees of Club Jäger, for which they would otherwise be eligible.



Jim Davnie
State Representative



Tim Mahoney
State Representative



Erin Maye Quade
State Representative



Jason Metsa
State Representative



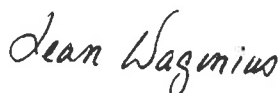
Rena Moran
State Representative



Mike Sundin
State Representative



Paul Thissen
State Representative



Jean Wagenius
State Representative

Cc: Pat Garafalo
State Representative