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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

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URBAN AFFAIRS
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DELEGATIONS

ALLEGHENY

April 20, 2020

Honorable Jim Cox
Majority Chairman, House Labor & Industry Committee
209 Ryan Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

RE: Hearing Request with PA Department of Labor and Industry

Dear Representative Cox:

I am writing to request that you as Majority Chairman of the House Labor and Industry Committee, schedule an immediate hearing with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry Secretary, W. Gerald Oleksiak to investigate the ongoing problems plaguing Pennsylvania's Unemployment Compensation System. This past weekend's problems with the new Unemployment Compensation System for Self-employed workers highlight the need for the General Assembly exercise its ability to investigate the ongoing issues with the our Unemployment Compensation System.

I am fully aware of the fact that the system has been inundated with claims since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, but it has become completely unacceptable that Commonwealth residents have been without income for over a month. My office has received a countless number of calls from constituents who filed for Unemployment Compensation on March 18th and have yet to see a pin number or a payment.

Additionally, I have heard from constituents with reopened claims who are receiving a notice that their claim is inactive. I have been informed that these constituents are required to have their claim manually activated by the department before they can file a biweekly claim. Many of these individuals have tried for weeks to contact the department via phone and email to have this resolved but are unable to get through. These constituents are being told to keep trying or remain patient until the department activates their claim. This is not a suitable answer and our constituents deserve better.

On Friday April 10th we received notification that the department began training new recruits, they were adding 18 additional call center staff from the PA Office of Inspector General, retired UC employees were starting back on April 13th, staff and a second shift were added to the mail/print shop, and that 24 hour operation was going to go into effect. It has now been over a week since these changes have been implemented and nothing has changed for the majority of the constituents waiting for their unemployment benefits. The Unemployment Compensation System is flawed, and we need to receive answers on what is being done to improve this system.

I am fearful that without action from the House Labor and Industry Committee, these delays will continue to occur. The system has needed an update for several years, and now more than ever it is seemingly failing the residents of Pennsylvania. I am confident that you will hold this hearing so that we can receive the answers our constituents need. Thank you in advanced for your support of this request.

Sincerely,



Austin Davis

State Representative
35th Legislative District

CC: The Honorable Pat Harkins