



GENERAL ASSEMBLY
STATE OF ILLINOIS

June 26, 2020

Thomas D. Chan, Acting Director
Illinois Department of Employment Security/Illinois Department of Labor
607 E. Adams St., 9th Floor
Springfield, IL 62701

Dear Director Chan,

We first want to extend our appreciation for the hard work of you and your staff over the past several months under incredibly challenging circumstances. We recognize that we are facing an unprecedented crisis and the work IDES is doing is absolutely critical to the record numbers of Illinois residents seeking unemployment benefits.

Today, we are writing with concerns about the many families and individuals we represent that have been unable to access the benefits to which they are entitled and have contacted our offices seeking assistance. Many of us have reached out to the Department on various occasions for guidance; most recently, the Department provided a webinar that district staff did not find productive. With regard to assisting our constituents in accessing unemployment benefits, in far too many cases we have fallen short – many constituents continue to be unable to complete the filing of their claims, process their applications and often, even make contact with someone from the Department despite days and weeks of trying.

These constituents are left feeling incredibly frustrated, with no confidence in state government's ability to provide the relief they are entitled to – and despite their best efforts, our staff are unable to help as there is no mechanism to allow them to coordinate with IDES claims services, leaving many issues unresolved.

In short, the way the system is currently set up makes it extremely difficult for us to provide the necessary assistance. On average, our offices have between 60-90 open cases at any given time, some dating as far back as mid-March. Many of our staff members have resorted to crowdsourcing solutions in a larger informal workgroup of district staff members. As a result, we are asking for the following actions, so we are able to adequately address and resolve these outstanding cases immediately:

- We ask that **constituents in need of individual assistance receive a call back from IDES within 7-10 days**. One of the most common statements made to our district staff is "You're the first human being I have spoken to." If a 7 to 10-day turnaround is impossible, we ask that an accurate timeline be communicated to district offices regarding callbacks so that we can convey that timeline to our constituents.
- We ask for an explanation from the agency **regarding how cases are prioritized** and why some cases are resolved in days while some take weeks or months.
- We ask that **district staff and IDES directly coordinate efforts**, such as helping schedule calls to applicants or tracking down applicants to ensure their availability for a call. This would ensure that the constituent is not left in the dark about when or whether they will get a call, when it will come, and they can avoid worrying they will miss the call and have to start the process all over again.
- We ask that **a uniform method be created for district office staffers to submit questions** regarding problems with the unemployment process, and that these questions be answered within 24 to 48 hours. There are specific issues in cases (after applications are already completed) that can be resolved without the need to submit a case for an IDES callback. If district office staffers could address these issues before passing cases along to the Department, we could cut down on callback wait times and cases could be resolved much sooner.
- We ask that **IDES increase staff resources dedicated to working with district office staff to handle outstanding cases**. IDES legislative staff have performed well under these circumstances and have handled a difficult situation with grace and professionalism. But with most district offices having a caseload of at least 60 UI cases pending at any given time, submitting every question to one or two individuals creates a ratio that is insufficient and unsustainable, resulting in the extreme backlog we are currently seeing.

Again, we appreciate the monumental task facing IDES during these unprecedented times; however, we require more direct engagement from IDES staff in order to help constituents navigate their unresolved cases and get them the resources they need ASAP. Some have been without income and trying unsuccessfully to access benefits for weeks or even months. We have to do better.

Please let us know how IDES and our district office staffs can work together to move these cases forward, deliver accurate and timely information and responses, and get Illinois residents the benefits they need. We would appreciate a response by the close of business on Tuesday, June 30th.

Sincerely,

Jamie M. Andrade fr.

Rep. Jamie M. Andrade

Kam Buckner

Rep. Kam Buckner

Kelly Burke

Rep. Kelly Burke

Jonathan Carroll

Rep. Jonathan Carroll

Kelly Cassidy

Rep. Kelly Cassidy

John Connor

Rep. John Connor

Deb Conroy

Rep. Deb Conroy

Fred Crespo

Rep. Fred Crespo

John C. D'Amico

Rep. John C. D'Amico

William Q. Davis

Rep. William Q. Davis

Eva-Dina Delgado

Rep. Eva-Dina Delgado

Anthony DeLuca

Rep. Anthony DeLuca

Daniel Didech

Rep. Daniel Didech

Marcus C. Evans, Jr.

Rep. Marcus C. Evans, Jr.

Mary Edly-Allen

Rep. Mary Edly-Allen

Lashawn Ford

Rep. Lashawn Ford

Robyn Gabel

Rep. Robyn Gabel

Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz

Rep. Jennifer

Gong-Gershowitz

Edgar Gonzalez

Rep. Edgar Gonzalez

Latoya Greenwood

Rep. Latoya Greenwood

Will Guzzardi

Rep. Will Guzzardi

Michael Halpin

Rep. Michael Halpin

Greg Harris

Rep. Greg Harris

Barbara Hernandez

Rep. Barbara Hernandez

Jay Hoffman

Rep. Jay Hoffman

Terra Costa Howard

Rep. Terra Costa Howard

Frances A. Hurley

Rep. Frances A. Hurley

Yehiel Kalish

Rep. Yehiel Kalish

Stephanie Kifowit

Rep. Stephanie Kifowit

Lindsey LaPointe

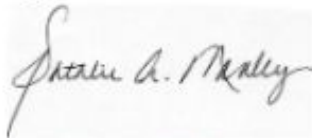
Rep. Lindsey LaPointe

Camille Y. Lilly

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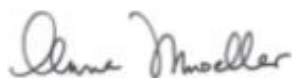
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Rep. Natalie A. Manley



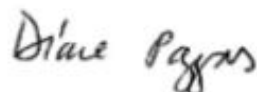
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Rep. Lamont Robinson



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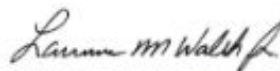
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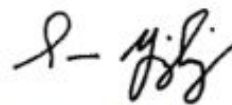
Rep. Ann M. Williams



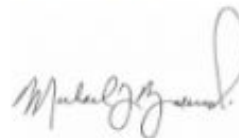
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