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The Honorable W. Gerald Oleksiak
Department of Labor & Industry
1713 Labor & Industry Building
651 Boas St
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Secretary Oleksiak,

I am writing this letter on behalf of my constituents and the citizens of Pennsylvania regarding the current challenges hundred of thousands of unemployed workers are facing when trying to receive unemployment benefits.

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrust us into uncertain times leaving thousands of Pennsylvanians without jobs. Many of these individuals are self-employed workers, and 1099 contractors who, as you know, were not formally eligible for unemployment benefits. These individuals have been without an income for several weeks now and are faced with extreme financial turmoil. The passage of the Federal Cares Act which creates the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program (PAU), provided a sense of hope and security for these individuals who were left without knowing when they would receive their next income.

Today I received troubling notification that there is no timeline for when these individuals will be eligible to apply for benefits. I understand that the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry just received guidance on this funding from the Federal Government on Sunday and that this is a brand-new program that this will bring about challenges to the current system. Although I understand these implications, I cannot remain silent on the fact that people all across Pennsylvania are struggling and are relying on this funding to survive. I urge you to work diligently to create a timeline, or a streamlined process to allow these individuals to apply for unemployment compensation within the next week.

If other states, such as New York, are able to have guidance ready for their constituents to apply for PAU; I am confident that we will also be able to do so in a timely fashion. If the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry is in need of any assistance from the legislature, please make these requests known. I know that myself and my colleagues stand ready to assist you in resolving this challenge.



House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

April 8, 2020

COMMITTEES

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STEEL
YMCA
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CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

DELEGATIONS

ALLEGHENY

In addition to the challenges with creating the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program, my office has received numerous complaints about failures of the current unemployment claims system. I fully understand that the current unemployment compensation system was never intended to handle over a million new claims in a week, including a new type of claimant, but this must be resolved immediately.

Pennsylvania residents are already under a great deal of stress due to this pandemic and need to know that we have a reliable unemployment system in place. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. If there is anything, I can do to help your administration to accomplish these goals I am ready, willing, and able to assist you in these efforts.

Yours in service,



Austin A. Davis
State Representative
35th Legislative District

CC: The Honorable Tom Wolf, Governor
The Honorable Frank Dermody, House Minority Leader
The Honorable Jay Costa, Senate Democratic Leader