

April 6, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Oleksiak;

I am writing on behalf of my constituents and the people of Pennsylvania regarding the current difficulties hundreds of thousands of unemployed workers across the Commonwealth are facing when applying for compensation.

In these unprecedented times, the strains on Pennsylvania's unemployment system and her employees has been stretched thin. My office is fielding hundreds of phone calls weekly – even daily – with constituents having difficulties opening claims, reactivating accounts and obtaining PIN numbers required to submit biweekly claims. The exponential increase in applications over the past few weeks has severely strained the system, with claims taking additional weeks to enter, deadlines extended for weeks to compensate for missing information from Unemployment, and confusion and frustration from the general public due to difficulties reaching the unemployment compensation offices through phones, online chat or email.

As these strains on the unemployment system are evident to all, they are not irresolvable. I would like to take this opportunity to open a dialog with your office regarding additional resources Labor & Industry may require to adequately serve our friends and neighbors in economic distress.

- Does the Department consider current staffing levels enough to process unemployment claims, or does Labor & Industry require additional funding to hire additional staff?
- Do you believe there is adequate customer service staff at the Office of Unemployment Compensation able to communicate and assist applicants with questions and challenges filing claims?
- What additional resources does the Department require to overcome the current and projected backlog of applications for unemployment compensation?

During these times where countless Pennsylvanians are dealing with a pandemic health crisis, coupling problems by uncertainty about economic health causes increased stress and problems for our entire Commonwealth. Inasmuch, I wish to assist the Department as much as the Legislature can provide help to our friends and neighbors of Pennsylvania achieve a sense of security in their financial future.

Sincerely,



Rep. Ryan A. Bizzarro
3rd Legislative District

cc: The Honorable Tom Wolf, Governor of Pennsylvania
The Honorable Frank Dermody, House Democratic Leader
The Honorable Jay Costa, Senate Democratic Leader