

Hello, there:

Due to the time constraints that all testimony must be submitted by 5 P.M. today, June 1, 2020, and the fact I learned of this extraordinary opportunity today at 2 P.M., I will have to be brief as well as apologize in advance for any typos or other grammatical errors a limited editing window allow to persist. As I constituent of her district, I will be forwarding to Representative Vikki Breese Iverson a more detailed account of the unacceptable issues and problems plaguing my personal claim for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program benefits, should any committee member wish to obtain those additional details. I am compelled to provide this testimony because I find myself counted amongst none of the claimant groups Mr. David Gerstenfeld detailed during the three hour special hearing conducted by the committee on May 30, 2020. This is concerning to me because it means there is a very real non-zero possibility my specific issues are not being addressed at all, nor will be in the foreseeable future, by the Oregon Employment Department (OED). In light of this, this testimony is being provided for your consideration to insure everyone is made aware of the existence of my specific claimant group's plight as well via the most expedient route currently available to me.

I will **not** relitigate at length the obvious problems the OED has encountered which have, repeatedly now, been covered ad nauseam. Suffice to say this about all that: If other states are currently doing it to relieve their backlog glut of claims and/or to allow their claimants to reach their employment department via telephone within a humane amount of time, and doing it without being found in violation of the federal government's guidelines, then the argument as presented by the heads of OED as to why Oregon is not doing the same is not really valid is it now.

For example, I am positively baffled how temporarily enacting the policy of only allowing claimants to call in to OED for both regular UI and PUA programs based on the combination of a specific day of the week and either (1) the last four of a social security number, (2) the customer identification number (CIN) assigned to them by OED itself, or (3), alphabetically according to the claimants last name, somehow violates federal rules, regulations, or codes. This practice has now been proven to measurably relieve and resolve the inbound telephonic congestion to an employment department. This solution additionally allows every claimant who needs to call and speak to a claim specialist to successfully do so on their designated day within a reasonable period of time. Not only has this solution been proven to work for other beleaguered US employment departments, but apparently the *country* of Canada as well if hearsay reports from Canadians citizens on social media are true. As such, I would be exceedingly interested in learning which specific federal policy has explicitly made adoption of this inbound telephonic gridlock solution by OED as well prohibitive in order to maintain federal compliance as previously claimed.

Moving on, there are two issues I wish to bring to the attention of both committee members and Mr. Gerstenfeld as they are at the crux of the decision to submit testimony today:

One issue OED is currently experiencing that **must** be corrected immediately, not in a few days or weeks, is this: The enhanced Weekly Request For Pandemic Assistance (PUA) weekly claim form (aka, weekly or weeklies) released on or about May 18, 2020, was not formatted correctly before its release. It contains a formatting error that is preventing its proper and complete transmission to OED as well as allowing the claimant to save a copy for themselves as proof their form was proper and complete at the time of submission. This fillable .pdf form released by OED does not, I repeat, does not save the YES or NO checkmark selections that must be made in Sections (1) A. Self Employment, (2) B. Employment, or, (3), C. Weekly Eligibility. I have repeatedly experimented with this finding now since discovering it. You cannot download a copy of the document to a device, tablet, or desktop/laptop, complete the checkmarks, and save it, without losing that checkmark selection data. When the claimant reopens the form they saved after filling it out, the checkmarks are erased as if they were never filled out.

The only way to prevent this loss of data once inputted by the claimant is to print off the form after completing it but *before* saving it. However, this means the claimant must then either fax or mail in the form unless they possess the ability/capability to scan it in as a new .pdf document if they wish to submit it via the online secure upload PUA portal. As OED as stated in multiple informational videos, instructions, and now employee webinars, put out this online portal is the fastest way for OED to receive and process these weekly reports which continued PUA eligibility and payment out for are contingent upon on every week. It should be a no brainer to recognize not every claimant is going to have ready and easy access to print off the form, access to a fax machine, and/or the ability to scan a correctly completed form in order to be able to utilize the online secure upload PUA portal, thus creating inequalities that cannot be allowed to continue to exist.

The other issue is as follows: The online secure upload PUA portal is currently giving all outward appearances it is not uploading and/or recognizing uploaded weeklies as correctly received at all. It is not providing receipt confirmation numbers to the claimant as verification of a successful upload as it is allegedly designed to do. It is not displaying weeklies uploaded as being received at all for at least some, if not all, PUA claimants when they log onto their claimant account to check on the status of their claim(s). For weeks now, not days but weeks, PUA claimants have been told this is a known "glitch" that OED is allegedly on top of. This problem needs to be fixed immediately, not in another few days or weeks. It is unacceptable to not be able to provide claimants with the very basic necessity of being able to prove they submitted their weekly report on time when, if OED says they have not, OED can withhold disbursement of an entitlement until a claimant restarts his or her claim.

Without proof to submit via fax that the error lays exclusively on OED's end, the claimant must go through a process that will very well take them weeks to complete as it requires them to call in and speak to an OED PUA-specific claim specialist to have this "simple error" corrected. In other words, a claimant will have to call into an

employment department already experiencing inbound call gridlock. To compound the unreasonableness of this problem for PUA claimants, neither WorkSource Oregon employees nor OED regular UI claim specialists can assist PUA claimants on this matter. I leave it up to committee members and Mr. Gerstenfeld to continue the death spiral of this problem if, for every week a claimant submits a weekly via the online secure upload PUA portal and this problem repeats itself as it currently is indeed doing, to its logical conclusion as far as the timeliness of getting PUA claimants entitled benefits to them.

Thank you all for providing me this opportunity to interact with you, albeit indirectly, and taking the time to read my submitted testimony today. I can only hope you, too, now realize the depth of the graveness of the situation when basic processes in OEDs flowchart of how a claim is processed are not failing due to historic claimant numbers, they have already failed due to internal errors and continue to fail since nothing appreciable has been done to correct them to date. Representative Breese Iverson, as I mentioned earlier, I will be in touch with you shortly with a more detailed specific personal account of how these current unaddressed OED problems are failing PUA claimants in your district.

Sincerely,

M.H.

due to the happy discovery of her additional role as the representative for my district of residence as well. While I am not apologetic, I do wish there was a happier reason driving my first contact with you Ms. Breese Iverson.

my district representative who to my happy discovery just now also happens to be a sitting member of the B&L committee,

Unfortunately it is still too early to tell to submit myself as proof of this problem as I personally will not be able to verify until June 3, 2020. However, know now all outward appearances point to neither my claim for the week of May 17-23 submitted via the upload portal on May 30, 2020 -or- for the week of May 24-30 submitted via portal on May 31, 2020, have been received to date therefore they are not being processed today as they should be and I will not receive payment for this Wednesday. And this, when I have not only uploaded through the secure upload portal, but have now faxed as well as submitted via the secure email. When a weekly claim is submitted three ways, and NONE of those ways results in the claim being processed and married up with the account, the system is not in need of "glitch" repairs; it is irreparable Broken and must be replaced with something that can actually process and marry up claims within 48 hours or less OEDs own policies in place necessitate. THIS is why OED needs to finally concede what they are doing is not working and finally acquiesce to going the same route New York, , and have done and hire Google to process these claims. Google already has the system in place now that works and that needs to be taken advantage of by Oregon if we are ever to see ourselves clear of the current crisis within a reasonable time frame.