

June 1, 2020

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of myself and some other Oregonians that have felt the affect of the COVID-19 crisis and the lack of preparation and action by many of our federal and state leaders. I am Paige Hook, a community member of the Santiam Canyon, a lifelong Oregonian, single mother of three, member of the LGBTQ+ community, domestic abuse survivor, sexual assault survivor, and advocate for tax dollars to be spent as if lives depend on each penny – because they do. I am also a state employee, a workers' rights advocate and an elected local leader, although I do not represent my employer or my city in any official capacity during this testimony. I have been given various levels of permission to share the stories of friends, other local leaders, mothers, fathers, people of color, business owners, employees, so some come with names and some do not. Much of this will be a cut and paste of their stories.

As for a short story of mine, I have a conduct complaint filed against a powerful leader in the legislature – likely one of your friends – and with that came what seems as nothing other than a punishment for filing a complaint against this elected official when I was put on admin leave with no work in March. I take issue with the fact that I have tried to get the legislature to approve me to volunteer my time on state dollars to do something other than nothing. I have asked if I can donate blood, help a non-profit, and would gladly help out the Employment department if the legislature would approve me to use state time to do state work – time I'll get paid for regardless of whether I do work or not until the legislative administration can figure out how to get me appropriate access to email which has taken them nearly 3 months so the investigation can move along. When I watched the hearing the other day and heard there are 200 employment dept employees on leave merely because we can't get them proper work from home status I was disgusted and outraged. I am calling on your committee to fix this issue immediately. Clearly the issue is more than just needing to fire a director. We need all hands on deck, plus some. Below is testimony from others. Thank you.

From a member of the Santiam Canyon:

"I thought I would see if you could pass this on to Speaker Kotec. My company is set up to where I am an employee and I am eligible for unemployment benefits. I chose to lay myself off in order to keep a couple of my people employed as logging is at a standstill for nearly all of us in the area and draw unemployment benefits for the first time in decades. Clearly my situation is different than the vast majority of current claimants but the extra money due me would be nice and would help keep a couple of my people employed a bit longer. I can't imagine what the tens of thousands of claimants across the state are going thru desperately needing benefits and calling dozens of times a day not getting in touch with anyone. I have called and got nothing with busy signals, I have emailed and get nothing but a canned response, I have faxed and have yet to get any return. All I get is a form stating an administrative decision was issued that I did not provide sufficient information to process my claim and I need to call the office. I have received 12 such forms.... We have all seen the epic failure of the OED, I am sure the Speaker has her hands full with this issue and is doing her best, and this is just one of thousands of complaints she has been getting. I rarely agree with Senator Wyden but I do at this time, Kay Erickson needs to be fired. In round numbers I am owed well over \$10,000....." (Photo included below of claim denials)

Weeks Claimed Information

In most cases, weekly claims that are payable are paid the next business day after they are received. The payment information below shows all payment information for the last twelve months and is current as of 12:58 AM 05/30/2020. Your weekly benefit amount is currently \$ 648

Week Ending Date	Date Received	Claim Status	Amt. Paid	Date Processed	
05/23/20	05/26/20	Denied			Info
05/16/20	05/18/20	Denied			Info
05/09/20	05/11/20	Denied			Info
05/02/20	05/04/20	Denied			Info
04/25/20	04/27/20	Denied			Info
04/18/20	04/20/20	Denied			Info
04/11/20	04/13/20	Denied			Info
03/28/20	03/30/20	Denied			Info
03/21/20	03/23/20	Denied			Info
03/14/20	03/19/20	Denied			Info
03/07/20	03/13/20	Denied			Info
02/29/20	03/02/20	Denied			Info
02/15/20	02/20/20	Paid	\$ 648	02/20/20	Detail
02/08/20	02/14/20	Paid	\$ 648	02/18/20	Detail
01/04/20	01/07/20	Waiting Week			Info

[Apply to receive your payments by direct deposit or debit card.](#)

If you failed to receive a check, a check tracer may be requested 10 days after the date paid.

[Claim Status Menu](#)

[Exit](#)

From Miriam Cummins in House District 15:

"I first filed on April 4th. I didn't receive any type of communication from the employment department. I tried calling and all I got was a busy signal. I tried contacting them through email and received a canned email saying that they couldn't give our information over email. It wasn't until May 26th when I saw that my initial claim was finally processed. I didn't know how much I would be getting until it was already processed. Did not receive any other type of notification of my claim via email and received the information of breakdown of payment via mail. I had to log in to the claim portal to see any type of status, but no communication from the Employment department.

Having to wait 7 weeks to hear anything from the employment department it affected our whole family. The level of stress and anxiety as every day went by with no response made our family dynamic unsteady. Had to depend on my husbands income, and at the same time of stressing about money, had to be a teacher for my children.

"I was fortunate that we had one income in our household, and I can't imagine the struggle and level of stress who both parents are still waiting to hear from the Employment Department. Waiting almost 8 weeks, is not acceptable. Children are also affected by the financial stress. This affects them psychologically and emotionally, that in some cases cause a long term affect."


From a Oregonian Woman I spoke to over the phone for over an hour:

I heard about her horrible experience with someone at the state named T. Lewis that wrote statements that misrepresented her case which resulted in a denial. She was told she could not be provided the information that was given to the hearing staff in the decision and for a woman that has worked hard her entire life and found herself unemployed she is still fighting the system to get the benefits she is owed. Benefits she and her employers have paid into for years. This is a condensed version of her story, but I assure you it is appalling, and I highly recommend chatting with her. I'm happy to connect you if she will allow it.


Heidi Mann from the Santiam Canyon stated:





"Hi Paige. I know my story isn't nearly as bad as some people's but my experience with unemployment has been ridiculous. I had intermittent layoffs at work due to this virus. Luckily my initial claim had went through although the waiting week still kept me from getting any pay the first week. Anyway, I filed for a future layoff period and called and waited over an hour on hold only to be hung up on. I then emailed at least 5 times with no response. I also received something in the mail and filled it out and sent it back but heard nothing after waiting for 2 more weeks. I finally got through to them on Friday the 29th after waiting on hold for almost 4 hours. The guy assured me my claim was fixed and I should see a change on the online access and would soon be getting a check. Nothing on my online account changed so far and I'm now facing the fact that I might be in for another 4 hour wait on hold next week. Luckily I've been back to work but I know that is not the reality for some. I also asked the guy about the waiting week because I know Kate Brown had waived it. All he could tell me was that the rumor WAS that people would get it at the end of their claim and the rumor NOW is that people will get it at the end of the year. How is that helping people who have bills now though? Like I said, I know so many people have a worse situation than I right now but if sharing my experience will help in any way, feel free."


I also heard from people on Social Media – one in the PUA program, but you can see in the image below that did nothing for this individual and they are emotionally affected. Another from a business owner that had to close and has gotten busy signal day after day at the unemployment department and all she needs is a question answered so she can file her claim. I heard from a local business owner about how they got zero assistance with their 4 month old business and has to close their doors after being denied grants/loans.





Notifications 


All **Mentions**

 **Erik Schultz** @radschultz · 5h
 Replying to @PaigeForOregon @OregonGovBrown and @juliefahy
 Thank you for helping share our stories and struggles.

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 **Erik Schultz** @radschultz · 17h
 Replying to @PaigeForOregon
 Today marked my 10th straight week of filing for UI with NOTHING. Was in the PUA pilot program, which meant nothing. Last day of actual work was on March 7th. Just a wee bit stressed.

 **Crypto Stylz** @CryptoStylz · May 31
 Replying to @PaigeForOregon

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05/23/20	05/26/20	Week claimed, not processed yet		
05/16/20	05/18/20	Week claimed, not processed yet		
05/09/20	05/11/20	Week claimed, not processed yet		
05/02/20	05/04/20	Week claimed, not processed yet		
04/25/20	04/29/20	Week claimed, not processed yet		
04/18/20	04/29/20	Week claimed, not processed yet		
04/11/20	04/29/20	Week claimed, not processed yet		
04/04/20	04/29/20	Week claimed, not processed yet		
03/28/20	04/29/20	Week claimed, not processed yet		

Thank you for your time. I hope you look into this major issue that is affecting many of us. Many of us want to help. Let us.

Sincerely,

Paige Hook

971-328-0928