

Hello,

I am writing to submit written testimony concerning OED. I am a business owner based in Seaside, Oregon whose business has been severely harmed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the clients that I would normally work with have had to slash their own budgets as a result of the pandemic, and no longer have budget available to hire me. Since the state of emergency was declared, I have made less than \$200 in gross earnings, despite continuing to work and do everything possible to bring in revenue.

I filed for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance on the same day it became available, April 28th. My application has not even been processed yet. When I have called my local WorkSource Oregon office in Astoria to check on the status of my application, they have told me to simply "Be patient". Unfortunately, the past due notices I am receiving don't share my patience.

On May 18th, I called my local WorkSource Oregon with a question regarding grants. I had discovered a charitable foundation offering one-time grants to donate to female business owners impacted by COVID-19, and I wanted to find out if applying for this would cause me to lose PUA. The representative I spoke to said he did not know and had no way of giving me an answer. He said the only way I could receive an answer was to email the question to OED_PUA_INFO@oregon.gov, which I did immediately. I have received no response.

On May 28th, I sent a follow-up email to this same address with an additional question. I informed OED that, although the weekly filing instructions on their site say that I should be receiving a confirmation number after submitting a weekly claim via secure upload, I have never received a confirmation number and simply get redirected to this page on their website upon uploading my weekly claim forms: <https://secure.emp.state.or.us/ocs4/index.cfm?u=F20200528A133942B49442800.4116&lang=E> I have not received a response to this message either. I do not know if any of my weekly claims are even being received since I am not getting a confirmation number, and I have no way to check this on their website because my claim still has not been processed as of today, June 1st.

Other issues I have experienced include the fact that the instructions for the initial PUA application and weekly claim forms have not been posted until days after the forms go live, meaning that many of us submitted our applications without clarity on what the questions meant or how to fill the form in. The weekly claim form is constantly changing; the weekly claim form was updated last week, but as of today, there are still no updated instructions with guidance on how to answer the new questions.

My husband is also a sole proprietor, and his business has been completely shut down by the pandemic, so we are trying to survive on no income. The only reason we have sustained ourselves this long is by not paying any utility that will not immediately shut us off. We have been using our stimulus money to cover immediate and unavoidable costs, such as medication that is not covered by my health insurance, and are holding our breath hoping that PUA will come in before we completely run out of money. My stomach clenches every month as I watch the unpaid bills pile up.

I am still working regular hours in an attempt to compete for any available work from clients, while simultaneously spending hours trying to manage the endless maze of PUA, and it feels like I have two full time jobs, neither of which are paying me. I have and continue to be in touch with multiple elected officials about my issues, which is also time consuming.

While I am sympathetic to the unprecedented nature of this pandemic and aware of the load this places on the system, I am in agreement with Senator Ron Wyden that the system has clear issues that must be addressed immediately. Desperate Oregonians need to know when they will be able to pay their bills, and WorkSource Oregon offices need to be able to provide answers to crucial questions instead of directing us to an email address that does not respond.

Thank you very much.

Kind regards,

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