

To: Oregon Senate Interim Committee on Labor and Business
900 Court Street NE, Room 453, Salem,
OR 97301

September 4th, 2020

Azumi Stapp
Forest Grove, Oregon

Below you will find my testimony that I would like you to read at the public hearing on Labor and Business.

Sincerely,
Azumi Stapp

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Dear Oregon Senate Interim Committee on Labor and Business,

My name is Azumi Stapp, a resident of Forest Grove. I'm writing this testimony to express my indignation with the Oregon unemployment department.

Let me make it clear my frustration stems not simply from delayed payments. It is from the department's lack of competence, availability, transparency, and sense of urgency. I find it unacceptable the ineffective and inefficient procedures which the department still practices.

I have two examples.

I was furloughed from my job earlier than most due to Covid-19. It took me six weeks to start getting benefits after I filed for unemployment. In the meantime, I kept receiving letters vaguely saying they had some questions regarding the status of my citizenship and I had to contact them. I was ready to provide any information they needed, but there was no way that I was able to reach them in a timely manner. I called hundreds of times over the weeks only to receive a busy signal, never even reaching a hold. I sent emails and never heard a word from them. I even sent an overnight mail package, including what I could only surmise was needed, but I doubt it was ever opened - an agent since told me there was no indication of them processing my mail. This level of ineffective communication is beyond unacceptable.

The second problem is what I'm still dealing with. My benefits have been suspended since the third week of June due to the fact that I'm a school employee and they need to verify my qualification for the benefits during the recess. I'm on a 12 month contract which the office already has in my record. I was able to reach the office a couple of times in July and August, and the only answer they could give me is that I just have to wait until my case is processed. I have been in contact with my school and they haven't heard from the office. Summer is over now. September 1st was the last time I spoke to an agent after being on hold for 4 hours starting at 7am. This person told me the process is confidentially bound by laws and that they could not share any information with me even though this case involves me. I have a right to know my own case. They once again said they had no idea how much longer it would take and the only thing I can do is to wait. It's been 12 weeks since the last payment. Where is

the sense of urgency? Without knowing when the next payment will be, how can I make a plan to pay bills? If I were to lose my home and unable to feed my own child, is the employment department going to take responsibility? For other Oregonians who are actually facing these very struggles at this moment? Infuriating, shameful, and disgraceful are understatement.

The department clearly needs better transparency, accountability, effective communication tools, to update the old system, as well as processing current cases as soon as possible. A basic modicum of humanity would be nice as well.

Sincerely,
Azumi Stapp