



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

September 4, 2020

Dear Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Knopp, and Members,

We are coming up on almost half of a year on this new way of life. As of this writing, we are approximately 171 days out from the Executive Order issued on March 17, 2020: Gatherings of 25 or less; when hospitality businesses were instantly impacted, and tens of thousands of Oregonians were put out of work by no fault of their own.

From the start of the shutdowns, to the resulting mass unemployment, my office has experienced an overwhelming amount of constituent outreach which none of us were prepared. My colleagues in both houses and both sides, without a doubt, faced the same impact. Our offices went from legislative functions to full crisis-management and social work. Each office has taken on this all-engulfing workload in different ways, to do our part to help mitigate as much of this immediate crisis to the best of our abilities. The sheer number of hours dedicated to assisting our constituents with the unemployment issues alone, has been almost insurmountable. I can assure you it was not contained within a 40-hour week. We did it because it is our duty to assist our people. And it still isn't enough.

We have witnessed, firsthand, how unemployment ignites a firestorm of issues for our constituents. First comes the lack of income, then living expense priorities start shifting, food and shelter start to slip away, and then hopelessness sets in. Oregon had a crisis of homelessness, hunger, and addiction issues prior to March of this year. My guess is we are heading into an even greater crisis that has yet to reveal itself. And it starts with unemployment.

Up until a couple months ago, our ability to help our people during this crisis has been almost futile. Only recently, since Interim Director Gerstenfeld took over, has there been a way for our legislative offices to communicate with and to advise the Oregon Employment Department about constituents who have been waiting months for their unemployment claims to be processed. It has been the least and best we can do for our constituents. And we appreciate the creation of processes and adjustments to help us, in order to help them. Again, it isn't enough.

Continued to next page.

SHELLY BOSHART DAVIS  
STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
DISTRICT 15



## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Continued from page 1.

Oregonians have been rendered helpless in a situation they did not create for themselves. They have done all the correct steps to do what they can, to keep a roof over their heads, food on the table, and businesses struggling to survive. But because of an antiquated system without flexibility, our constituents have not received the assistance they need – when they have desperately needed it the most.

People reach out to us daily from all points of Oregon. Some haven't had any income since March and April. These hardworking Oregonians are distraught and destitute. Many of them are marginalized, at risk, and living paycheck to paycheck. If any one of us did not have income coming in for months, no savings, empty food shelves, families to feed, at risk of losing everything around us...maybe then there would have been a greater sense of urgency in year's past.

What this should show all of us is how mismanagement of priorities, agencies, people and money can affect Oregonians in a moment of crisis. Instead of being prepared, we have for months been working to shuffle through this mess that was years in the making.

Sincerely,

Shelly Boshart Davis and Her Dedicated Staff  
Oregon House Representative | District 15