



June 4, 2024

The Honorable Representative Dacia Grayber, Chair  
The Honorable Representative Lucetta Elmer, Vice-Chair  
The Honorable Representative Paul Holvey, Vice-Chair  
Interim House Labor and Workplace Standards Committee  
900 Court Street NE,  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Follow-up information to May 31, 2024, Employment Department Update

Dear Chair Grayber, Vice-Chair Elmer, and Vice-Chair Holvey,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide updates about our technology roll-out, the Paid Leave Oregon program, and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program to you and committee members on May 31, 2024.

Representative Scharf asked for more context about the following information we shared on Slide 9 of our presentation, "UI Workload Compared to Staffing":



Specifically, Representative Scharf asked about what our UI Workload has been compared to our staffing levels over a greater period of time. As I expressed during the meeting, the Department has experienced chronic challenges in not being able to match our staffing levels to support the needs of Oregonians seeking UI benefits. Because UI workload has some very strong seasonal fluctuations, it is most helpful to compare the same time periods of each year. Looking at the February 2019, shortly before the pandemic, there were just over 400 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) administering the UI program, and about 130,000 weeks of benefits claimed. February of 2024 had 449 FTE on average and about 144,000 weeks of benefits claimed. Our total number of

FTE in February of 2024 included temporary newly hired employees to help with the Frances transition.

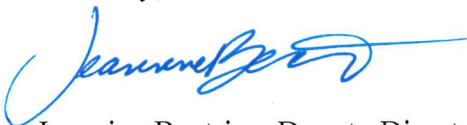
We feel it is also important to keep in mind that Oregonians generally have greater expectations for the Department to provide a higher level of customer service than the agency had to provide in the past, and for good reason. Oregonians are a diverse population and the services we provide need to reflect their needs. We now offer more ways for our customers to reach out to us than before the pandemic. That means more ways for people to contact us about our services (e.g. chat bot, live chat, and web messages), in more languages, and increased focus on community engagement and communication.

We also have more frequent and complex fraud attacks on our system than before the pandemic, which appear to be a permanent situation now. We are continuously improving and updating our systems and procedures to stay ahead of people who are trying to commit fraud – who also continually change their tactics. Fortunately, we have robust systems and procedures to detect and prevent fraud but we still need to ensure we have sufficient resources to support this work and complete all the other work we need to perform.

Representative Scharf, as well as other committee members, expressed interest in the outreach we have performed about the Paid Leave Oregon program with employers, specifically small employers. We intend to update the committee in more detail about these activities when we visit with you during September 2024 Legislative Days and appreciate the suggestions about how we might improve that outreach, but for now, you can access our Employer Toolkit webpage at <https://paidleave.oregon.gov/employers/toolkits/>. Additionally, here's a link to a Paid Leave Oregon Brochure we created specifically for employers to provide their employees (which can also be accessed via the above-noted link): <https://d1o0i0v5q51p8h.cloudfront.net/paidleave/live/assets/resources/PaidLeave-Brochure-EN.pdf>.

We are committed to providing the best customer service possible and look forward to providing you with updated information. We also appreciate the focused dedication on working together to better serve unemployed Oregonians and the work you and your staff do to help your constituents who need our assistance. Of course, feel free to let us know if there's anything else we can share in the meantime.

Sincerely,



Jeannine Beatrice, Deputy Director  
*On behalf of* David Gerstenfeld, Director  
Oregon Employment Department

cc: Claire Adamsick, Legislative Policy Research Office Analyst



The Oregon Employment Department is an equal opportunity agency.