

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 10, 2021

The Honorable Larry D. Turner
Acting Inspector General
Office of Inspector General
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Mr. Turner,

For the last year, millions of Americans have been forced out of work because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, Congress has acted to boost unemployment assistance during these unprecedented times, including in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (H.R.1319), which extends enhanced unemployment insurance for tens of thousands of Georgians who are currently relying on these benefits until September 6, 2021. But too many people are still waiting for help.

In Georgia, frustrations are mounting over the delays in delivering unemployment benefits. As of March 2021, Congress has allocated \$67 million to the Georgia Department of Labor (DOL) to assist the state with the administrative functions required to set up programs to administer and distribute the three temporary unemployment insurance benefits created under the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act (P.L. 116–136): Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC); Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC); and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA).

This assistance includes funds for baseline administration of the emergency COVID-19 benefits, emergency administrative funds, and funds to combat unemployment insurance fraud and identity theft. Despite supplemental federal financial assistance, there are widespread and ongoing complaints about the Georgia DOL’s continued inability to timely pay valid claims, to promptly hear unemployment claims, and to pay unemployment benefits to qualified claimants.

According to recent reports, the state is “still struggling to get unemployment benefits to out-of-work Georgians in a timely manner.”¹ Although there are 400,000 Georgians who are currently

¹ AJC: Out-of-work Georgians still face long waits for unemployment benefits [[February 9, 2021](#)]

receiving unemployment benefits, there are about 180,000 who have yet to have their applications approved. For many of the 400,000 constituents, it took months of phone calls and emails to the Georgia DOL and the intervention of congressional offices for constituents to finally begin receiving the assistance they so desperately needed.

An overwhelming number of Georgians have also resorted to calling their State Representatives and State Senators seeking help with getting their unemployment benefits because they had such difficulty contacting staff members at the Georgia DOL. In these calls, they express how they are in fear of losing their homes and that they cannot purchase groceries for their families because their unemployment checks never arrived even though they are valid claimants.

As a result, members of the Georgia General Assembly have contacted our offices about the ongoing issues citing a “lack of transparency, discrepancies in data reported in press releases and on the website, and violations of federal statutes requiring timely payment of Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits.”² The breakdowns in the system are so egregious that we are requesting that your office perform an audit of the Georgia DOL Unemployment Insurance claims processing and payment system.

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 will soon allocate \$2 billion to the U.S. Department of Labor to support program integrity and timely access to benefits and \$8 million to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration for costs related to day-to-day federal administration of unemployment insurance. As we prepare to provide additional funding for program administration, we need to ensure that the funds are used appropriately.

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact Thomaesa Bailey with Congresswoman Carolyn Bourdeaux at Thomaesa.Bailey@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

Jon Ossoff
United States Senator

Raphael Warnock
United States Senator

Carolyn Bourdeaux
Member of Congress

Sanford Bishop
Member of Congress

² Letter to Congresswoman Bourdeaux from a member of the Georgia General Assembly dated February 8, 2021.

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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

Lucy McBath
Member of Congress

David Scott
Member of Congress

Nikema Williams
Member of Congress