



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
Patty Ritchie

Statement From Senator Patty Ritchie

PATTY RITCHIE May 13, 2020



My office is again being flooded this week with hundreds of calls from people who are at their breaking point due to the current situation at the New York State Department of Labor. And, these aren't just my constituents—these are people from Brooklyn, Buffalo, the Bronx and numerous other places across the state.

Again, I fully understand we are facing an unprecedented demand for assistance. However, it is not OK that people who applied for unemployment nine-weeks ago have still not seen a dime. And it's not just that—there are a litany of other issues, including people having their personal information mishandled, others being hung up on after spending hours on hold, or applicants getting calls from representatives who can't actually answer any of their questions but instead, tell them to "be patient."

The Governor and his staff continue to boast about how well the unemployment system is performing. They tell us not to worry, because claims will be backdated and people waiting nine weeks will get their money, eventually. They vilify and bully anyone who dares to suggest the system needs to be better.

Most of the people reaching out for help—people who depend on their representatives to be their voice—cannot go nine weeks without a paycheck. Just yesterday, I received a call from a veteran in tears because she is out of money and scared she will not be able to provide for her special needs son. When I called for change at the New York State Department of Labor, I was standing up for her and for countless other people across the state who are in similar situations. As a state senator, that is my job.

For the Governor to call this pandering or a “cheap shot” is not just offensive to me, it is also dismissive of the countless individuals who have gone nine-weeks or more without any income. This type of commentary demonstrates just how out-of-touch this administration is when it comes to understanding the dire situations many are in right now.

If the Governor and his staff want to truly understand what New Yorkers are up against and fully realize the need for immediate action at the New York State Department of Labor, I invite them to come answer the phones for a day in my office. Maybe then, they will realize that sticking up for these people is far from “cheap.”