



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Griffo and Buttenschon call for investigation into Department of Labor following audit

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO November 22, 2022

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Following a recent audit that found least \$11 billion in improper unemployment payments were distributed during the COVID-19 pandemic, Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, and Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon, D-C-Marcy, are calling for an investigation and joint legislative hearing to determine what led to this failure by the state Department of Labor (DOL).

According to the state Comptroller's Office, the Department of Labor failed to replace its long-troubled Unemployment Insurance system and ad hoc workarounds to compensate for the old system. This weakened oversight and ultimately contributed to an estimated billions of dollars in improper payments during the pandemic.

The Department of Labor also refused to provide auditors with the data that would have enabled auditors to calculate the precise amount of improper payments and was slow to provide requested information that delayed the completion of the audit. The audit examined the period from January 2020 to March 2022.

Sen. Griffo and Assemblywoman Buttenschon have asked Sen. Jessica Ramos and Assemblywoman Latoya Joyner, who chair the Labor committees in their respective chambers, and Sen. James Skoufis, who chairs the Senates Investigations Committee and Assemblyman John McDonald, chair of the Assembly Oversight Committee, to conduct a joint hearing to look into this issue.

Additionally, Sen. Griffo and Assemblywoman Buttenschon have requested that Department of Labor Commissioner detail how the department plans to pay back the money from the fraudulent actions.

“The state Comptroller’s audit detailing significant issues with the distribution of unemployment payments by the Department of Labor during the coronavirus pandemic is alarming and troubling,” **Sen. Griffo said.** “Many New Yorkers, through no fault of their own, relied on these payments to help them and their families get through this public health crisis. Unfortunately, unscrupulous actors have taken advantage of this situation for their own benefit thanks in large part to the failures of the Department of Labor. It is imperative that we get answers from the department so that we can ensure that this situation does not occur again in the future.”

“The taxpayers of New York deserve to know that their money is safe and being used appropriately,” **Assemblywoman Buttenschon said.** “While we all know the pandemic created unprecedented demand on our systems and agencies, we need to work to discover what failed and how to rectify it going forward.”

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