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NEW YORK
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SENATE



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April 22, 2021

The Honorable Roberta Reardon
Commissioner, New York State Department of Labor
NYS Department of Labor
Building 12, W.A. Harriman Campus
Albany, NY 12240

Dear Commissioner Reardon:

I write on three matters of extreme urgency that require the immediate attention of you and your staff at the State Department of Labor.

The first issue concerns a troubling lack of responsiveness from the State Department of Labor. My office has been inundated with calls and emails from constituents sharing their disappointment, and deep frustration, with the State Department of Labor's apparent inability to respond promptly to their repeated inquiries regarding Unemployment Insurance claims. Local television stations have broadcast news segments confirming the inability of constituents to not only receive a timely response but any response from your Department.

I find it inexplicable – and frankly inexcusable – that more than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, and with an annual appropriated operating budget of nearly \$1.8 billion, that the State Department of Labor somehow remains unable to provide a timely, informed response to New Yorkers that have made inquiries and requested assistance. Commissioner, some of my constituents have waited, and are still waiting, weeks for a response from your Department. They also have made multiple follow-up calls and emails to no avail. My office continues working hard to help these constituents and ensure they receive a timely response from the Department of Labor that addressed their concerns. It is my understanding that other State Legislators' offices have likewise experienced similar concerns regarding the difficulty in receiving a timely response on behalf of their constituents from your Department.

The second issue is the widespread prevalence of Unemployment Insurance fraud that appears to be growing exponentially. My office has received multiple notices from municipalities, businesses, and individuals across my 43rd District citing instance after instance of fraudulent Unemployment Insurance claims being filed. In fact, one current Town Supervisor and a former elected official in my Senate District shared that Unemployment Insurance paperwork recently arrived for their signature and that the paperwork, which was filled out in their names, listed their personal information.

Third, and related to the preceding concern, constituents also have contacted my office sharing that when they finally received a response from the State Department of Labor and were able to file an Unemployment Insurance claim, it was denied because a fraudulent claim had already been falsely filed in the person's name.

My office has learned of numerous examples of this ongoing and alarming pattern of Unemployment Insurance fraud.

Due to the increasing volume and widespread scope of these fraudulent Unemployment Insurance claims, and the fact that some of the claims appear to include detailed personal information, I am asking you to verify the integrity of your Department's records and data to ensure that they have not been subject to hacking or other outside criminal conduct and interference.

On behalf of my constituents, many of whom are still awaiting answers from the State Department of Labor, and others who have experienced Unemployment Insurance fraud and been denied benefits they should rightfully receive, I would appreciate a detailed response to my inquiries. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daphne V. Jordan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Daphne Jordan
State Senator, 43rd District