

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



SUSAN SERINO
41ST District

ALBANY OFFICE
ROOM 613
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
(518) 455-2945
HYDE PARK OFFICE
4254 ALBANY POST ROAD
HYDE PARK, NEW YORK 12538
(845) 229-0106
PUTNAM OFFICE
117 TOWN PARK LANE
PUTNAM VALLEY, NEW YORK 10579
(845) 528-0417

RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
AGING
CULTURAL AFFAIRS, TOURISM, PARKS AND RECREATION

COMMITTEE MEMBER
FINANCE
INSURANCE
SOCIAL SERVICES
TRANSPORTATION

April 12, 2021

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Roberta Reardon
NYS Department of Labor, Commissioner
Building 12
W.A. Harriman Campus
Albany, NY 12240

Re: Continuing Unemployment Issues

Dear Governor Cuomo and Commissioner Reardon:

As I wrote in a letter on this issue last May, I am troubled to say that it appears that the difficulties in New Yorkers accessing their unemployment benefits have not only persisted, but have once again gotten worse. At that time, I wrote that my office had been contacted by hundreds of residents who were struggling to access their unemployment benefits “for as many as six, seven, and even eight weeks.” Now, my office has heard from over 100 constituents on this issue this morning alone—too many of whom have not been able to receive their benefits for months. New York’s unemployment system is broken, and you must make fixing it an urgent priority.

Now that we are more than a year into the New York State on PAUSE order that saw the State lose approximately 1 million jobs in 2020, many of the same individuals who struggled to receive their benefits last year—if they were able to receive them at all—are faced with a new challenge. Some New Yorkers seeking to access their benefits now need to reapply, however the State has not made it clear which New Yorkers need to do so and this has led to a significant increase in complaints and delayed payments that were already too high to begin with.

On a call with a liaison from the Governor’s office on Friday, April 9th, we were told that your office is aware of the on-going issues with the unemployment system and that they are being worked on, but we did not receive any details on what is being done to effectively address these concerns. At this point—nearly one year after State actions forced millions of New Yorkers onto unemployment—it is not enough to say you are

simply “aware” of the problem. This is impacting real people, with real families to feed, who are unemployed as a direct result of State government actions. They deserve better from your Administration.

New York State’s pandemic restrictions and efforts to stop the spread has prevented hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers from working, however during this time the State has failed to sufficiently work for these same New Yorkers. It is wholly unacceptable for New York State to have asked so much of so many throughout this pandemic for more than a year and to still be unable to connect them with the benefits they are owed or even answer their most basic questions. There is no excuse for New Yorkers to still be unable to get through to the Department of Labor for answers to their questions, and if the State is going to require some New Yorkers to reapply for their benefits, it is incumbent upon the State to immediately inform those who need to do so, as well as provide clear guidance and an effective system for doing so.

On behalf of the thousands of constituents my office alone has worked with to attempt to connect them with the benefits they are owed, as well as those in other communities and those who have tried to navigate this process alone, I implore you to make fixing this broken system a top priority.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sue Serino".

Senator Sue Serino
41st District