

June 23, 2020

To: All Wisconsin Media, Elected Officials, Appointed Officials, etc.

From: Wisconsin Unemployment Support Group

RE: Unemployment Insurance in Correlation with Covid-19

Once again, as a collective group, we have found ourselves reaching out on a mass level to create awareness, effect change and most importantly garner support and finality of unpaid benefits. As of today, 150,000 individuals have been pending while waiting to receive their unemployment benefits. Applications began flooding into the DWD on March 13<sup>th</sup> as the state prepared for an emergency shutdown. However, the DWD did not send up alarms about caseload and concerns for another three weeks.

An issue of staffing became apparent. With millions of claims coming in that needed processing, Sec. Frostman responded by adding more people on the phones. The crisis continued to unfold and still, the processing of claims ranked as the number two issue within the department. Again, Sec. Frostman addressed concerns by adding even more people to the call center. The pattern is there, the call center has been defined as the priority and the administration has not addressed the need for claims processing. Critical thinking and professional crisis management would lead anyone qualified for running the DWD to increase the number of individuals processing claims. Deductive reason shows when the claims are paid, the phones stop ringing.

In addition to gross negligence in processing claims, Sec. Caleb Frostman signed contracts with three vendors to assist in managing the excessive workload. These vendors are out of state, one out of the country and none of them benefiting our own state economy. With millions of individuals out of work, the DWD couldn't find suitable people within our own workpool?

Sec. Frostman is not alone in these issues. Our own governor is aware, receives briefings, and continues to ignore the very people that helped put him in office. With direct knowledge of over 200,000 Wisconsinites awaiting unpaid benefits, Gov. Evers allowed for moratoriums to expire on May 27, 2020 as he continued his silence around this issue. These expirations pushed thousands of families into continued default concerning their homes, vehicles, utilities, crashing credit scores and lack of funds to secure personal necessities. Those with mortgages suffer as no emergency aid applies to mortgages if they are not federally backed.

As this situation continues to spiral out of control, claimants are reaching 14-16 weeks of pending claims. Will the DWD be paying interest on these funds once they are disbursed? Even the IRS does that.

We believe, as citizens and taxpayers, that this crisis has been mishandled, ignored, and treated with a severe lack of urgency. The state has launched programs to aid in housing,

energy assistance, and food supplements. Has no one stopped to note that, if benefits were being issued in a timely manner, none of these forms of special aid would be necessary? Instead, Gov. Evers continues to throw money at a problem that does not require funds, it requires accountability and ACTION.

We demand that Gov. Evers addresses his failing administration. He must check his privilege and speak to and acknowledge his own failings within the UI crisis and physically show his presence in the solutions.

We demand an account of what the DWD has done from Jan 31, 2020 until present to adequately resolve issues in relation to the COVID crisis.

We demand a change to law 108.04(12)(f) and allow claimants that receive SSDI and are or were employed to be eligible for UI benefits. UI is not public assistance. It is a right earned and deserved by any person who works in Wisconsin for an employer who pays into the state trust fund.

We demand the start of PEUC.

We demand payment and cleaning of claims.

We demand respect.

We demand the firing of Sec. Caleb Frostman and Division Administration Mark Reihl.

We will not be silent.

We will not go away.

Elections are coming and there will be changes due to the way this crisis has unfolded throughout our state.

Be aware, if you have chosen to remain silent and ignore your constituents, your seat is NOT safe.

One voice can be silenced, but 3,700 will force you to listen.