

Testimony of Nataki Edison
Before the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development
Council of the District of Columbia
Public Hearing Regarding:
Oversight of the Department of Employment Services
September 16, 2020

Hello. My name is Nataki Edison, and I am here today to share my story about trying to obtain my unemployment insurance benefits.

I was laid off from my job on March 14th due to COVID-19. I first applied for unemployment insurance on March 15th. After five weeks of hearing nothing, I received a lump sum on April 22nd that included back payments for these five weeks. I didn't receive any more payments until May 8, when I received payment for my sixth week of unemployment. I have not received any payments since even though I have continued submitting weekly claims cards.

After I received my last payment in May, a note appeared in my DC Networks account saying that my claim was not payable. For the past four months, I have spent countless hours contacting the Department of Employment Services trying to figure out why my claim was not payable. One week, I tried calling D.O.E.S. three days in a row. Each day, I was on hold from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Literally eight hours straight. No one ever picked up.

In addition to calling, I have also tried contacting D.O.E.S. via email. I have even began working with the Legal Aid Society to try to get my issue resolved. D.O.E.S. finally emailed me a fact-finding questionnaire on August 27. I returned the questionnaire that day. As of today, my issue still has not been resolved, and I'm still waiting for my payments.

This experience has been extremely hard for me. I had to get on food stamps to make ends meet. The stress of trying to get my unemployment benefits has been overwhelming, and at times, I was worried that I could not cope. I am still in a financial hole.

I am hopeful that D.O.E.S. will finally resolve my issue and send me my unemployment benefits for the past four months. No one should have to go through all of this just to get the unemployment benefits that they are entitled to.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony about my experience with the Department of Employment Services.