

**DECLARATION OF MULUGETA HAILU**

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I, Mulugeta Hailu, declare under penalty of perjury as follows:

1. I am a resident of Silver Spring, Maryland.
2. I am 64 years old.
3. I work at Pan Am Cab Company but own my own cab and set my own hours. I work as a cab driver and am responsible for picking up and dropping off passengers in D.C.
4. I lost my job in or around May 2020 because my ability to drive my cab was severely limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as I had no customers. Although I started driving again around September 2021, I have barely made any money from it, about \$40 at the most.
5. After I had to stop working because of COVID-19, I had trouble paying for rent and food for myself. And I could no longer provide financial support for my two youngest children, ages 25 and 19, who are living with their mother. I also could not make repairs on my cab.
6. I applied for unemployment compensation online on May 11, 2020.
7. I never received any written notice from DOES stating that I was monetarily eligible for benefits.
8. I started getting benefits starting with the week ending May 16, 2020.
9. I filed weekly unemployment compensation claims online from May 17, 2020 to September 5, 2021.
10. I received unemployment benefits for 47 weeks – the weeks ending May 16, 2020 to March 6, 2021, and the weeks ending May 29, 2021 to September 4, 2021.

11. I did not get benefits for the weeks ending March 13, 2021 through May 22, 2021, even though I was still unemployed, I continued to file my weekly claim cards, and I remained able and available to work apart from the significant slowdown in business due to COVID-19.

12. I never received a notice from DOES about why they stopped my benefits.

13. When I log onto the DOES online portal for unemployment compensation to check my claim, I see that my payment history page has notes for the weeks ending February 27, 2021, to May 8, 2021, saying that I have “been disqualified and/or held ineligible for this period” and notes for the weeks ending May 15, 2021 and May 22, 2021 saying that “Your claim has been received . . . is not payable because your entire benefit was applied to reduce your overpayment.”

14. I never received a Notice of Determination of Overpayment from DOES or any benefit offset receipts.

15. Since May 15, 2021, DOES has withheld \$958 of my weekly benefits because of this overpayment that the agency says I have, and another \$4,311 because of the disqualification or ineligibility, so that I’m missing a total of \$5,269.

16. I believe the overpayment is in connection with weeks ending February 27, 2021 and March 6, 2021. DOES paid me benefits for those weeks but my DOES online portal has notes saying “Your claim has been received as of 2/28/2021 is not payable. You have been disqualified and/or held ineligible for this period” for both weeks.

17. I do know not why I was held disqualified or ineligible for weeks ending February 27, 2021 and March 6, 2021.

18. I called DOES every two weeks for several months. Every time I called, a DOES employee would tell me someone would call me back with more information but I never heard from them.

19. I reached out to Legal Aid for help with my benefits on September 8, 2021. My attorney at Legal Aid, Christine Kumar, has reached out to DOES to ask for the determination and overpayment notices and about why my benefits were terminated. Legal Aid has emailed DOES about my case approximately once a week for 9 weeks, starting on September 29, 2021. We never got a response.

20. On October 21, 2021, Christine Kumar and I called the DOES customer service line to ask about my case. We asked for the determination notice for the disqualification period from February 27, 2021 to May 8, 2021. We also asked for the overpayment notice for benefits offset for weeks ending May 15, 2021 and May 22, 2021. The DOES representative we spoke to informed us they would email the determination notice and overpayment notice to me and Christine Kumar, but neither of us ever received it.

21. I have now gone 29 weeks without an explanation for why I was disqualified for the weeks ending February 27, 2021 to May 8, 2021.

22. My financial situation is very difficult. Since I did not receive my full unemployment compensation benefits, I have not been able to afford rent, fuel for my car, food for myself, or support for my children. I had a simple life before the pandemic and was working properly. Then the pandemic hit, and I was unable to provide for myself and my family like I was used to. I have medical issues that require me to go to the hospital every two weeks for check-ups and that require medications. I need all of my unemployment benefits to pay for these expenses. I cannot afford to pay back or miss out on any of my unemployment benefits.

23. I am completely destroyed. I am afraid of losing my home because I cannot pay my rent without begging my friends to help me pay for it. It's very discouraging for me. I had to use up all my savings to cover my expenses once the pandemic hit.

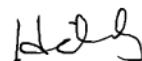
24. Unemployment compensation saved me because with it, I could afford to pay for my rent, food and support for my children. Before I started receiving unemployment compensation, I was relying on the little savings I had, which I quickly used up. I then applied for and started receiving unemployment benefits in May 2020 and was able to manage. Between March 2021 and May 2021, when I wasn't receiving any unemployment benefits, I was under a lot of stress. I had to rely on my friends for money during that time, which was an awful feeling for me. Some of my friends want me to pay back the money, which I do not have. It is very stressful to not know how to pay them back. I feel down thinking that I have to live this kind of life where I have to beg my friends for money. I want to retire soon but I am afraid to do so because I do not have any money saved up and the pandemic is still affecting my ability to work.

25. The offset and termination of my benefits without notice and opportunity to appeal has caused me emotional harm, including feelings of depression and fear. I am afraid I will not be able to support my children or myself without help.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

I signed this declaration with assistance from a professional Amharic/English interpreter. I reviewed and understand the content.

Dated: December 30, 2021  
Silver Spring, MD



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Mulugeta Hailu

# Signature Certificate

KWPEJ-AXWHK-JHY3B-NMDLM

Mulugeta Hailu

hailum105@gmail.com

Signed via link



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