

**DECLARATION OF YOHANNES WOUBE**

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

1. I am a resident of Seattle, Washington.
2. I am 58 years old.
3. I used to live alone in Washington, D.C., but I currently live with family in Seattle since I could not afford to stay in my D.C. apartment after the pandemic started.
4. I worked as a taxi driver in Washington D.C. from about 2010 to 2020.
5. I lost my job in March 2020 due to COVID-19. I remained unemployed until November 2020, when I started working for a few weeks as a temporary driver for Amazon. I then stopped working again until I resumed full-time employment on February 22, 2021.
6. I applied for unemployment compensation in D.C. online on or around April 15, 2020, and began to file my weekly claims cards at that time.
7. I never received a written decision regarding my application.
8. On December 3, 2020, I received payments for 6 weeks – the weeks ending October 17, 2020, to November 21, 2020. I continued to file my claims cards and received benefits for the weeks ending November 28, 2020, to December 26, 2020.
9. I had some trouble filing claims cards over the phone, and I was not able to file claims cards for the weeks ending July 4, 2020 to July 25, 2020; October 3 and 10, 2020; and February 20, 2021, until Legal Aid helped me file them on December 20, 2021.
10. I applied for PUA in July 2021 when my attorney at the Legal Aid Society of D.C. realized that I may have been enrolled in the wrong program in 2020 and worked to switch me over.

11. I never received any written notice from DOES stating that I was monetarily eligible for regular UI or PUA benefits. I requested it on many occasions and my attorney did as well, and DOES never sent a copy.

12. I received PUA unemployment compensation benefits on October 29, 2021, but I only received 6 weeks of payment, with a partial payment for the week ending January 9, 2021, and full payments for the weeks ending January 16 to February 13, 2021.

13. When I check my payment history online, there are notations for the weeks of benefits that I did not receive, except for the weeks where Legal Aid just helped me file my claims cards in December 2021. The weeks ending April 18 and April 25, 2020 are marked as being monetarily ineligible; and the weeks from May 2 to June 27 and August 1 to September 26, 2020 are marked as DOES having received my claim and that they will contact me if they need more information.

14. I filed claims cards for every week I was unemployed or employed part-time, from the week ending April 18, 2020, to February 20, 2021. For each of these weeks, I was still unemployed or employed part-time and I remained able and available to work.

15. I never received a notice from DOES about why they stopped my benefits. For the weeks where DOES received my claims cards before December 2021 but hasn't explained why they didn't paid me, I'm missing \$13,760.

16. I called DOES more than 15 times over the course of several months to try and reach someone for assistance. When I called, I would wait for more than 2-3 hours to speak with an agent. I spoke to someone almost every time I called, and each time, I was given different explanations for why my benefits were not being paid. Every phone agent gave me hope that my benefits would be paid out, but I was never actually paid after the phone calls.

17. On April 19, 2021, I filed a hearing request with the Office of Administrative Hearings, but I was not able to attach anything to the request (as the rules require) because I did not have a UI denial notice. On July 16, 2021, OAH dismissed my hearing request because I was unable to provide them with a determination by claims examiner.

18. I reached out to Legal Aid for help with my benefits on July 9, 2021. My attorney at Legal Aid, Lise Guerrier-Louis, has reached out to DOES to ask about why my benefits were terminated but has not received a response. Legal Aid has emailed DOES about my case approximately once a week for 20 weeks, starting on July 12, 2021.

19. On August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021, I called the DOES customer service line with my lawyer, Ms. Guerrier-Louis, to ask about my case. We asked the DOES representative what unemployment program I was in and an agent at DOES told us that they see requests in the system to switch me over from UI to PUA. We asked the agent about my missing benefit weeks and the agent said that DOES was processing my missing weeks of benefits. Lastly, we asked why I did not receive a UI denial notice. The agent could not provide an explanation for why I never received a UI denial notice, but she said that they would put in a request to send me a UI denial notice. I never received the notice.

20. After I stopped receiving unemployment compensation benefits, my financial situation was dire. I was not able to afford housing. I had to move from Washington D.C. to a family member's home in Seattle, WA so that I could gain assistance from family members. I have borrowed money from many friends that I now owe. I also could not pay rent for many months in Washington D.C. due to a lack of income and I still owe my former landlord for many months of back rent, around \$5,000.

21. I have family overseas that I used to support financially who I could no longer support due to my lack of income. They suffered without me being able to provide for them.

22. I also had to deal with bouts of hunger and starvation due to not having enough money to pay for food.

23. I am suffering from depression because of these events. I had to leave my home of more than a decade because I did not have a reliable source of income. I have had many sleepless nights. Without my unemployment compensation I was constantly worried about my life. I also spent a lot of time thinking “why me?” and wrestling with these thoughts. Receiving my unemployment compensation would mean peace and closure for me.

24. This is not the first time I have received unemployment compensation. I also received unemployment compensation after losing my job as a parking attendant in 2011. I received unemployment benefits for about 10 weeks from the end of 2011 through the beginning of 2012.

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  
Seattle, WA



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Yohannes Woube

# Signature Certificate

SWEJW-ESQCS-PQIWU-YKXVR

Yohannes Woube

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