

DECLARATION OF WILLIAM PERRY

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

1. I am a resident of Washington, D.C.
2. I am 63 years old.
3. I live alone.
4. I have worked in the construction industry my entire adult career. I am a mason. I lay brick, mix mortar, and do other tasks necessary to lay bricks.
5. Around March 2020, I started a new masonry job in the District of Columbia. After a few months, my employer drastically reduced operations because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
6. My employer laid me off work on or around June 6, 2020. I have been unemployed since then.
7. Soon after being laid off work on or around June 6, 2020, I filed a claim online for unemployment compensation with the Department of Employment Services (DOES). I began filing weekly continuing claim forms each week, and I remained able and available for work.
8. A few weeks after I filed a claim, I started calling DOES each week to ask why I was not being paid unemployment benefits. I could rarely get through to a live person at DOES. When I could reach someone, the DOES employee told me that any issues with my claim would be resolved. However, DOES never resolved my claim.
9. On or around March 2021, I received a decision from DOES denying my unemployment claim because of insufficient wages in the base period (called a Monetary Determination). (W. Perry Attachment A.) I knew this decision was wrong because I earned wages in the base period (including in March to June 2020) that were not listed in the determination.

10. On June 7, 2021, DOES contacted me asking that I file a Monetary Re-Determination. I responded to DOES by submitting proof of my wages that were missing from the base period on the March 2021 Monetary Determination. I asked DOES to add these wages to my claim and make a new decision approving my claim for benefits.

11. After submitting a Monetary Re-Determination, I continued to follow up with DOES to ask about the status of my benefits. Nobody that I spoke with could give me an update on my redetermination so I informed Attorney Hoff that I would schedule an in-person appointment.

12. On or around August 19, 2021, I visited the DOES office for an in-person appointment to ask when DOES would pay me. I was told that the most recent claim DOES had for me was dated in 2018. I had to show DOES recent emails from a representative to show that I did have an active claim. However, DOES told me they could not find my continuing weekly claim forms, so I filled out claim forms again for all weeks between June 2020 and August 19, 2021. I gave those completed claim forms to the DOES employee I met with.

13. On September 7, 2021, when I still hadn't been paid unemployment benefits, Attorney Hoff and I called the DOES customer service line to ask when DOES would pay me. The DOES representative told us that there was an ongoing "IT issue" and that my claim was "lost in the system." The DOES representative said my claim was reading as "in progress" and that they would put in an IT ticket for me.

14. After September 7, 2021, I stopped following up with DOES because I was repeatedly told they could not find my claim. However, Legal Aid continues to contact DOES each week to ask DOES to resolve the ongoing issues with my claim. Attorney Hoff tells me that Legal Aid contacted DOES about my case approximately once a week for thirty-five (35) weeks.

15. I have not received any new decisions in the mail (since the March 8, 2021 decision) that would explain why DOES hasn't paid my benefits or why DOES denied my claim from on or around June 6, 2020.

16. I have now gone seventy-seven (77) weeks without getting any benefits and I have not received anything from DOES regarding the redetermination I filled out.

17. My financial situation is strained. I have not been able to afford to pay my utility bills. I have been late on rent payments. I had to ask to borrow money from my family members and friends to get by. It has also taken an emotional toll on me. I feel like the DC government has jerked me around and it weighs on me not knowing whether my unemployment claim will ever be resolved. I want to be able to move on with my life.

18. I work in the construction industry, and my work has been hit hard during the pandemic. I thought I would be able to return to work sooner, but I haven't been able to find another job.

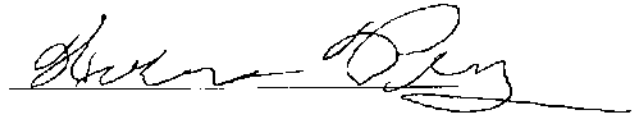
19. This is not the first time I have applied for unemployment compensation in recent years. To the best of my recollection, I applied for unemployment compensation two times in the past four years. The demand for masonry work fluctuates due to factors outside of my control, and as a result I have experienced occasional layoffs from employment. During these times, I apply for and need unemployment compensation to pay my bills.

20. Given this recent experience with the DC government not paying me unemployment benefits, I am concerned that if I am laid off in the future, I will have no safety net to support me. Without receiving the unemployment compensation that DC owes me, I am worried that I could lose my housing, that I still won't be able to afford my bills, and that I won't have the chance to get back on my feet. This has caused me a great deal of stress.

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

Dated: December 17, 2021

Washington, DC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William Perry", written over a horizontal line.

William Perry