

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 3, 2020

The Honorable Eugene Scalia
Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Secretary Scalia,

As you are well aware, millions of Americans are filing unemployment claims as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In California alone, according to the most recent numbers available, 878,727 people filed for unemployment in just one week, and 1.9 million have done so since March 12. Claims in California are rising at a faster pace than the nation as whole. While these numbers are record-setting and deeply alarming, Congress authorized enhanced unemployment compensation in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act; however, the Department of Labor (DOL) has yet to issue guidance to states enabling them to implement these provisions and provide enhanced benefits to unemployed workers. We urge you to issue guidance immediately.

Under the CARES Act, Congress provided all individuals receiving unemployment compensation with Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), an increase of \$600 per week in addition to other UC benefits intended to replace 100% of wages for the average American worker. Congress also provided new and expanded eligibility for self-employed workers, independent contractors, and individuals unable to start a new position due to COVID-19, under Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), a historic expansion of benefits to reflect our evolving economy and ensure that all workers have access to these critical benefits. Congress also enhanced federal funding of state benefits for part-time workers and in the first week of unemployment. These critical provisions were intended to reflect the uniquely devastating effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on working families and on the economy as a whole.

The California Employment Development Department (EDD) has been working nonstop to prepare their systems and workforce to implement this law and to get benefits into the hands of Californians who desperately need them; however, California and other states are unable to implement these provisions—and, in turn, unemployed workers are unable to receive these enhanced benefits—as a result of DOL’s delay in issuing guidance to states. While it is positive news that DOL has reached agreements with all states and territories to adopt these programs, and has issued limited guidance on some provisions of the law, states remain unable to implement it.

Again, it is critical that DOL issue this guidance to states in a timely manner that reflects the urgent nature of this crisis and the day-to-day struggles of working families who find themselves filing for unemployment, many for the first time. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jimmy Gomez
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Cosigned:

Nanette Diaz Barragán, Member of Congress
Ami Bera, M.D., Member of Congress
Julia Brownley, Member of Congress
Judy Chu, Member of Congress
TJ Cox, Member of Congress
John Garamendi, Member of Congress
Grace F. Napolitano, Member of Congress
Jimmy Panetta, Member of Congress
Linda Sánchez, Member of Congress
Adam Schiff, Member of Congress
Mike Thompson, Member of Congress