

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Department of Employment Services

MURIEL BOWSER



DR. UNIQUE MORRIS-HUGHES

MAYOR

DIRECTOR

Elissa Silverman
Councilmember At-Large

Dear Councilmember Silverman:

Thank you for your letter dated March 26, 2021 regarding the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (“the Act”) that was signed into law by President Biden. At the Department of Employment Services (DOES), we take our commitment to our residents and our unemployment claimants very seriously. We appreciate your concerns and would like to address each of your requests individually.

- 1. The Department of Employment Services (DOES) should send an email to every claimant giving a plain-language explanation of the American Rescue Plan and how it will help them. Robocalls and text messages should be sent to alert claimants to the email.**

DOES is currently working to develop direct, comprehensive messaging for claimants that will go out at least once a month. In addition to email messages, we will also periodically send out text blasts and robocalls on updates. In the interim, we have made updates to our [website](#) and the [DCNetworks page](#), which reflect detailed information regarding the Act. Additionally, the most recent edition of the UI Action Alert Newsletter, sent to our entire claimant population, included detailed information regarding the various benefit related extensions under each UI program, made available by the Act.

- 2. Similar to the agency’s infographic, the email should explain how the American Rescue Plan will help UI and PUA claimants, breaking out explanations for workers in the first 26 weeks of UI, workers currently receiving Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), and workers currently receiving Extended Benefits (EB).**

The messaging that we are working to deploy and which was included in our most recent newsletter will mimic our fact sheet and provide additional information, in the form of a flow chart, to guide claimants on the next steps for their particular claims.

- 3. DOES needs to make sure that all call takers, including outside contractors, have proper training on the program so claimants do not receive a wide range of answers depending on the call taker.**

Our Office of Customer Experience provides daily messaging and will continue to reinforce our call taker standards with both DOES and contract call takers.

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4. **Many claimants have not been able to file weekly certifications and have received messages from the agency saying they are now ineligible for benefits because they have exhausted traditional UI, PUA, PEUC, or EB. There needs to be a straightforward process to resolve these issues.**

The system remains operational and is being updated this week with the provisions in the Act. While all programs included in the Act are receiving updates, not all claimants are affected. We encourage claimants to contact our Customer Navigation Center at (202) 724-7000 if they have specific questions about their claim.

5. **DOES must keep its websites (both the DOES site and the DC Networks sites) up-to-date so that claimants can use it as a resource for information.**

The DOES website, our DC Networks site, and *DOES en Español* website will continue to be updated as more information becomes available.

6. **DOES must notify the Council's Committee on Labor and Workforce Development any time there is an issue with the UI system that affects more than 100 people.**

DOES makes an effort to be transparent and will update the Council as soon as information becomes available.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "U. Morris-Hughes".

Dr. Unique Morris-Hughes

Director, Department of Employment Services