

My name is Alex Kirshner. I live in Ward 1. Thanks for listening to me today. I wanted to bring to your attention an issue with the way D.C.'s unemployment insurance system works, which I think could be fixed easily and would make a significant difference for a lot of unemployed workers.

When someone on unemployment insurance performs work, those earnings must of course be reported to DOES, so their UI benefits can be reduced by the appropriate amount. Every state in the union has a policy to this effect. Where D.C.'s policy is somewhat unique is that it requires claimants to report their earnings the week they actually do the work, rather than when they are paid.

I have noticed this repeatedly this year, since losing my job in May. One week, I made \$1,800 working on a project. It was my sole work that week, as work is hard to find right now. It took more than two weeks for that payment to arrive in my bank account, but because of the District's rules around earnings reporting, I had reported that work the week I did the work. This meant I did not receive my UI benefit that week, and I was not made whole by the company I performed the work for until two weeks later.

This was not a problem for me, personally. I have been extremely fortunate throughout this pandemic to have plenty to get by. But it struck me that this system could be a massive problem for a worker living paycheck to paycheck. If they have to report earnings the week they work, but for some reason the payroll processing at the employer doesn't get them their money for a while, they can actually be *worse* off. They can be required to go without income for an extended period of time.

This might, bizarrely, create a disincentive for someone to find work. It might cause someone who finds a gig to be punished by not getting any money the following week and having to wait until a third party's check clears – and the situation gets even worse if there are complications in making the payout, as any worker knows can happen. Sometimes it takes weeks to get paid. Sometimes it takes months.

I'm not sure if D.C. requires earnings to be reported this way because lawmakers were worried about people somehow gaming their payout timings to get more off the system, or to help keep the system organized, or for what reason. But those do not seem like big problems to me during a once-in-a-century pandemic. The most important thing is getting people the resources they need to survive, and I think a small rule change – to allow claimants to report earnings only once they've actually received them – would provide relief for many people who need it.

It would be an extremely simple way for this council and DOES to make life a little easier on vulnerable people, and I suspect it wouldn't do anything to change DOES' financial obligations. Thank you for your consideration of this idea.