

**Robert Druker's Testimony Before the Committee on Labor and
Workforce Development
Wednesday, September 16th, 2020.**

Good morning. My name is Robert Duker and I am a Local 25 member and bellman at the Hyatt Regency. Despite applying for Unemployment Insurance on the 26th of March, I still have not received it.

I was laid off, for the first time in my 44 years of work, on the 18th of March. I received a letter from Unemployment a week later that I had been approved for \$425 and that the paycheck should be coming on the 11th of April, 2020. It never showed up. I called every day for months without being able to get through, all while religiously sending in my weekly certification.

Finally, on July 21st, the office told me I needed to send in my pension information, which I did promptly. I was told I would hear back from them in 21 days. More months went by. I didn't hear from them again until this past Monday, when I was told the staff member assigned to be my examiner had left over a month ago, and a new examiner has been assigned to my case. There had been a new point of contact on my case for six weeks, and no one reached out.

I used to work for the DC government while I held down a job at the Hyatt, working as a Social Security disability claims adjudicator for DC residents. I know how these things should be handled, and how much of a disaster the handling of my case is. I am fortunate enough to draw a government pension from that job, without which I do not think I would have made it.

This is the first time I ever applied for UI. For me to go through this is heartbreaking. If someone in my situation didn't have any other income I don't know what they would do. It leaves a very bitter taste in my mouth. For the first time at my age of 72 and I can't get what I have worked my whole life to earn from society. I'm in terrible debt. Even when the money touches my hands it's ghost money, all of it will go to clearing my mountain of credit debt. When you don't have a job you lose your dignity, this process has just been salt in the wound. Thank you.