

TESTIMONY OF SHELLEY SIMS

Hello, my name is Shelley Sims. I live in Maryland and work in DC. I am currently a self-employed, independent contractor.

I received benefits, after a period of 14 weeks. I filed for UI on March 26 and received benefits on July 7.

I am testifying, not for myself, but rather I am testifying on behalf of those who may have been wrongly denied benefits, as I originally was.

After I originally applied, I was denied benefits for regular UI. Having read about PUA, I felt confident that I was eligible based on extensive research of PUA benefits.

Therefore, I persisted with pursuing my benefits by constantly emailing and calling DOES, doing research, contacting lawyers and even contacting Ms. Silverman's office. I received incorrect information almost every single time I spoke to someone on the phone at DOES. I even spoke to a supervisor at DOES who told me my chances of getting the denial reversed were slim. I applied for an appeal at U.S. Courts. I also contacted lawyer, Tonya Love, at the Claimant Advocacy Program (CAP), who confirmed my eligibility and provided me excellent support. I am grateful for her help. I had a hearing with the Courts. But, the day before the court hearing, DOES said I was eligible – I believe it was due to the deadline of the hearing and that it was coming to a head.

It is my belief that other people in my situation would have given up during the 14 weeks of trying repeatedly to get benefits. I nearly did give up, several times.

I could easily have given up if I had not been determined, diligent, and recorded notes of all my communication. I cannot imagine what someone who may have obstacles, such as not having English as their first language, or is unaccustomed to appeals and taking notes of each call, and does not have a free lawyer or support system -- would do. I imagine they would give up.

Again, my reason for testifying today is to say what I think is of utmost importance, and that is: **I strongly believe it's an obligation for those in the DOES system who are knowledgeable of eligibility to review each and every DOES denial – to see who may have been wrongly denied, through no fault of their own and given up.** This, I believe is a responsibility to the hard-working people of DC.