

HB 614 Prop. Testimony

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chairman LaRe and Ranking Member Rogers, I appreciate the opportunity to address you and the other members of the Ways and Means Committee about House Bill 614

My name is Melissa Alexander. I like so many other citizens of Ohio were impacted by Covid 19 and was forced to file for unemployment benefits. I had to wait on the system being available for part time/self-employed workers. I was delighted when it became available but there appears to be many issues with this system.

I personally had no issues entering in my information. It went pretty smoothly. I received a letter promptly telling me of my eligibility status. I provided copies of my 2019 Tax Returns and completed all the information required. When I received my eligibility letter, my letter indicated my entire income for 2019 was reflected as my weekly earnings. In doing so, it grossly overstated my weekly unemployment benefits.

I have called multiple times trying to get this error corrected. I finally spoke to someone who said they were unable to correct it but their supervisor could. They transferred me to that person. They assured me it would be resolved later that day and I would receive a call back. I received no calls back and the issue was not corrected.

I have sent in multiple emails and have received no response. I have tried to call and have either been hung up in the middle of being transferred to someone that could help. One morning, I called three times and every time, they would answer (after an extended wait on hold) and then the line would go blank.

The representatives answering the calls are doing just that, answering calls. They have no answers, no ways to resolve the issue and can't help. This system appears to have been rolled out too fast to basically just check the box...they have a system in place but no solutions to resolve.

When I did get in touch with an actual person, I was told I can't help you, let me transfer you or I can't do anything with numbers but looks right. One even said, I would be happy with that amount. One rep said, looks ok because you have dependents.

My benefits are overstated and now I have to be concerned about repayment with potential interest penalties due to their error. I don't even know what my weekly earnings should be. And on top of this issue, I now have to be concerned about a potential database glitch that possibly exposed my social security number. Shouldn't this database be more secure?

Chairman Merrin, thank you for giving me the time to discuss the legislation and I would be happy to answer any questions that the members of the committee may have.