

I got laid off on April 7th by my employer due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This was the first time I have ever been unemployed since I started working at 16 years old (I am currently 34) so I was unaware how to file unemployment with the current system.

I filed my initial claim on April 8th and was issued a denied/deduction over benefits amount on April 13th. When it came time to file my weekly claim on April 12th, the only option that I had was to reopen/refile my claim. I had been unable to reach a representative within the Job & Family Services department at all this first week.

When I completed the reopen/refile on the 12th, I was issued a break in claim and not paid again. I went two weeks without being able to reach anyone who could help me and two weeks with only having about \$300 deposited into my account (from my 2 days of work before being laid off) to provide for my family of 6.

On April 21st, I sent the following email to Job & Family Services requesting assistance again:

I am writing to request assistance with my application. I originally filed on April 8, 2020 and received the claim confirmation number of [REDACTED]. I filed my claim for week ending 4/11/2020 with a confirmation code of [REDACTED]. My application was approved on April 13th with a weekly benefit amount of \$ [REDACTED]. No benefits were dispersed for week ending 4/11 as I was over the allowed benefit amount.

When I went to file for week ending 4/18/2020, I only had the option to restart my claim. I filled out all of the information and was given confirmation code [REDACTED] and weekly claim confirmation of [REDACTED]. I was able to speak with a representative named Marilyn on April 20th and she helped clear the issues with my claim and stated that I should be paid tomorrow (4/21).

However, I was not paid and was able to speak with a representative in the pin reset department. She indicated that based on what she could see that my claim had been disallowed. In my correspondence inbox there is a notice of required action with an ID/case number of [REDACTED], but I receive an error message that I can no longer respond to this request for information (even though I was never able to open it).

I finally got paid for week ending 4/25/2020 and could start to breathe again as I could at least provide for my family a little bit. I had to reach out to Representative Powell to request assistance in getting the back pay for week ending 4/18/2020 which I finally received on May 14th. I was fortunate enough to be recalled to work on May 4th and have had all of my issues resolved thanks to Representative Powell and her team.

Moving forward, I believe the following things should be implemented:

- Require businesses to begin layoffs at the beginning of a workweek (in event of a mass layoff) to ensure that the initial week of unemployment cannot be denied due to a partial workweek which will mess up a claim moving forward

- Ensure the phone system will place the caller in a queue (even if the hold time is hours) to speak to a live person. Going thru the options only to get the automated message of "We are experiencing a high call volume, please try your call again later" is unacceptable. Allow the caller to decide if they want to remain on hold or call back another time.
- Ensure that the "Tier 2 specialists" follow up with the person who is experiencing issues with their claim. I was told at 2 different times via chat that a specialist would follow up with me regarding my claim and I was never contacted by anyone from Job & Family Services.

Thank you for your time.

Nathanael Marley