

**Unemployment Testimony
Senate Commerce Committee**

Annie Allen
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I applied for unemployment 6 weeks ago and was approved. I am self-employed and yet they approved me instead based on 2 very part time odd jobs I had last year. My letter said I would get \$122 a week. I also got a verification as an employer I guess because I am my own employer? I assumed I would get the 600 a week because of that but I have gotten absolutely nothing so far 6 weeks later and after a filing every week. I also have spent several days for weeks in a row calling every hour and getting a message and being hung up on so I have not had any way to ask any questions until I found a Facebook group but no one there really knows either. They all have similar questions.

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Barbara Ruge

I just wanted to express my thoughts. I have been off due to COVID 19 since March 23. I was paid 1 week of severance and reported this. I supplied a copy of the severance agreement with the separation pay statement. I had to call multiple times to get this addressed. I was disqualified for two weeks when I only got one week severance. I have filed an appeal to just charge me one week.

I used to work for KDOL. I applied for the Customer Service job and then was notified someone else was chosen even though I see on the site they are still hiring for customer service. Oh well, maybe I should sit on my butt like the rest of the deadbeats and draw a check. I've worked all my life since I was 12 years old. I am now 56. I supposedly have a job starting May 26. We will see what happens.

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Chantell Schartz

After reading comments left on the KSDOL posts and video sessions about others like me who filed original unemployment in 2019, exhausted benefits in January 2020 leaving us denied any unemployment, I created a Facebook group so we could somehow get our voices heard. The group continued to grow daily and after 2-3 weeks, we had over 500 members either experiencing the same situation or wanting to support those who were. Eventually, we gained the attention of the media and a state representative, Caroline Elliott and Stephanie Yeager respectively.

Please help us. Many have lost homes, cars, or even gone without food for 6-7 weeks now and we need someone to help. Here is my story:

I first filed in September 2019 after not meeting performance standards at my job of 5 years. My benefits exhausted in January 2020. I was offered an assignment through a temp agency. My assignment ended because of the virus scare.

I can't get a regular extension and cannot reapply until September 2020 when my benefit year restarts. I have screenshots of my account that shows weeks of my attempt to reapply for benefits, to file a weekly claim, and my inactive account status. My employer, the temporary agency, did submit my information stating when my last day was and the reason I lost my assignment to the KSDOL the week of March 24, 2020. Again, please help my Facebook group.

Thank you for your time,
Chantell Schartz

Unemployment Testimony Senate Commerce Committee

Cherri Walrod
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Here is a brief summary of my experience:

I am a self-employed. I own and operate a family child care home. I lost all of my income in March of 2020 because all of my daycare families kept their children at home when the governor's stay-at-home order was implemented.

I applied for Kansas unemployment benefits on 4-1-2020 for self-employed individuals as provided by the CARES Act.

I tried to call the KDOL phone numbers in order to try and obtain additional details and direction for the process for self-employed individuals. I completed the self-employment verification forms but had no way to submit them because the email links provided did not work.

Approximately, a week after my initial application I did receive an auto generated letter from KDOL which stated I did not qualify for unemployment insurance benefits.

Every time I tried to call, I received a busy signal for a few seconds and then the line would hang up.

I listened to the video information provided by the KDOL teams which they put out on Facebook. During one of the briefings, one of the KDOL team members shared an email address to use for submitting documents and questions. I tried using this email address which was provided and it did not work either.

I continued to try and call several times a week throughout April 2020. Eventually, the phone line stopped with a busy signal and started playing a recorded message. The recorded message basically stated: "**All representatives are busy. Please try back in an hour**". No matter how many times a day I would call and regardless of the time of day I called, I always received the same message. I tried to be patient and understanding but it is pretty tough when I had no idea when I might see another paycheck. Eventually, I gave up calling because it was apparent that it was a complete waste of my time.

On April 16, 2020, I sent all of my self-employment verification and supporting documents to the KDOL via certified letter and did receive a signed card back indicating the KDOL received my printed information. I have attached a copy of the cover letter for that submission to the KDOL. I continued trying to call several times a week even after I submitted my materials by mail. As of today, 5-11-2020, I have not received any further communication from the KDOL.

I certainly hope and pray that once the KDOL opens up for self-employed unemployment benefit applications tomorrow that I will qualify and receive back dated payments for which the CARES Act was created. I have exhausted all of my savings and I am at risk of going out of business if this current situation is not remedied. From what I understand, the CARES Act (in-part) was intended to try to keep small businesses from going under during the COVID-19 pandemic. **It seems like a real shame that most**

self-employed Kansans will not see a dime of the help that was promised until they are able to go back to work or they have gone completely out of business.

I am not placing blame on any one party, entity or group but this entire deal has been one hot mess. I know a lot of people are working hard to help solve the issues and technology problems which have plagued the KDOL system and I wish to thank everyone who worked toward solutions. I am submitting my testimony in hopes that something like this does not happen again.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Cherri Walrod

**Unemployment Testimony
Senate Commerce Committee**

Colleen Holl
(816) 804-2270

I was wrongfully terminated on March 4th after confronting my boss, one of the owners of the company I worked for, about a sexually inappropriate conversation that took place in the office while I was on the phone with a customer. This owner made up lies about my job performance and I was denied unemployment (this despite including my full explanation of the events that took place and after receiving 2 raises in the month of January).

I do not know how the case reviewers are trained, but I felt horrible after the interview process because it was one lie after another from my former employer and when I would try to explain I was told to answer the questions only with a "yes" or a "no" answer with no further explanation. I was horrified! I was then denied benefits. Two days after letting me go, that same company posted my picture on their Facebook page with a post about their excellent customer service.

I immediately requested an appeals hearing, only to find out that department was closed due to the coronavirus. How could that department be deemed non-essential when people are going without benefits? After contacting the ACLU, I have now been told that office should be re-opening and start hearing appeals by the end of May, but that they are extremely back-logged so the process could take months.

I was wrongly denied from the start, and now have had to rely on the kindness of others just to eat. Since they chose to close that department down as non-essential I feel like it should be reopened with more employees and Judges to hear the appeals in a timely manner! There are hundreds of others like me who have been waiting on this department to reopen and start hearing cases while going hungry and unable to provide for their families! I find this appalling! The very department that is supposed to protect us is starving us to death and contributing to the homelessness and hunger in their own State!

I also feel like they should better train their reviewers. The person I spoke with was rude and very short with me. She showed absolutely no empathy and appeared not to listen to a word I said since I was asked several of the same questions over and over. A couple of times she even tried to put words in my mouth and I would have to reiterate what I just said. It was truly one of the worst experiences I have ever had with the Kansas Department of Labor and makes me extremely fearful of the appeals process and any further dealings with the department. I believe the reviewers should be more closely monitored and reviewed themselves (i.e. number of denials v. acceptance, resident satisfaction, etc)!

It shocks me to know that Governor Kelly has been "unaware" of so many issues pertaining to this department! Staying on top of this is part of her job and she should be absolutely aware of every move they are making.

Colleen Hall

Dear Kansas Senate Commerce Committee:

My name is Dale Long and below is a brief outline of my recent experience with the Kansas State Unemployment System.

I realize that both you and the Department of Labor are busy with the current state of affairs and unprecedented level of overload on our infrastructure and systems. I filed my initial claim for unemployment in March 2020. From the beginning, the website has not allowed me to file my weekly claims. Initially, the consistent messaging was that I had no weeks to report and it showed a claim status of pending a determination. I have since received the positive determination letter dated 4/14, (received 4/25) from examiner #742 with a benefits start date of 03/02/2020. The web site continued to not allow me to file weekly claims for several weeks. The messaging on the site stated that there were no weeks to report when trying to file the weekly claims and the status has changed to not having a claim on record. I believe this is due to the standard system programming to de-activate a claim when a claimant fails to file weekly claims. Although this does not accommodate those of us who have been locked out during the recent change in claim volume or due to other system programming updates.

I have had made many calls to the Kansas Unemployment Contact Center over several weeks. (sometimes 15 – 20 per day) I have never been able to make contact to re-activate or fix my claim in the system. Most days, the call wait queue is full. Other days, I am on hold for 2-4 hours and get disconnected. Over the past several weeks, the phone message immediately switches to the "all contact center representatives are busy and the hold queue is full, go to the website" message when the phones go live at 8:00 am. I know this is because their department is overwhelmed with the Covid situation and massive overload of claims, and some sort of operational intervention to manage the call volume and time for call backs.

With some level of desperation and frustration over the more recent weeks, I have also attempted to activate or re-activate my claim by re-entering or filing the claim again based on some website messaging suggesting that this might work, although other messaging says not to do this. This has not helped either. I have attempted to mail and e-mail the contact center, but no responses. It has been several weeks for me without any income and I am in need of some progress. I did reach out to both my Kansas State Representative and Kansas State Senator in hopes they might be able to direct me to another path to get my claim unstuck or connect me with someone at the Kansas State DOL to explain my situation and get the claim activated. My thinking was that hopefully this would be an easy fix if I could communicate with someone there to activate or re-activate my approved claim so that I can enter my weekly activity for the past several weeks and going forward in order to get the benefit payments moving through the process.

While I did not hear back from the DOL, Julie Menghini at the DOL was helpful in activating my claim for a 10 day window which provided some level of progress. However, the system configuration was not set up to allow me to complete my weekly filings back to my benefit start date, just a few of the most recent weeks. I have since continued to call the contact center and have we-mailed Julie in an effort to get access to complete the other weeks based on the approved benefit start date. A simple programming change on this point could alleviate some of the contact center call volume.

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**Unemployment Testimony
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Don Hansen
Great Bend, KS

I have been trying to file for unemployment since Monday morning and phone system has been completely jammed (it now is Tuesday night). Can't even wait on hold because cue is full. And can't submit an application online because I haven't been a Kansas resident for 18+ months (arrived July 2019).

Suggestion #1: until call center problems are fixed, how about using an email system? Seems that could be fairly quick and inexpensive to deploy, and with a clever design could utilize lesser skilled staff to handle simpler issues.

Suggestion #2: update website to notify users of system problems. I had to find out what was going on by reading 3rd party news sources.

Don Hansen

**Unemployment Testimony
Senate Commerce Committee**

Gary Albers
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I am writing to you as a taxpayer (and employee in Kansas) who is extremely disappointed with the response of the DoL in the last six weeks or more (concerning unemployment and workshare).

It is apparent to me that as long as everyone is working and paying in, there is not a problem. The problem is/was when people need to access the money that is rightfully theirs. I have personally and professionally tried to contact the DoL and received no assistance at first, then weak and slow assistance as time passed. The on-line information and assistance is either non-existent or weak as well.

Granted, I agree this is unprecedented, but from a taxpayer's perspective, we have been treated like second-class citizens by our own state. WE did not ask for this to happen, nor were we consulted concerning a shut-down. So, why were we (the ones that were able to work) the ones that suffered financially?

I understand you having a meeting about this, and I wanted my voice heard. . .

Sincerely,

Gary Albers
Draftsman



1-800-892-3537 Ext. 1023

Izabella Borowiak-Miller

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May 11th, 2020

To whom it may concern,

My name is Izabella Borowiak-Miller. I am 22 years old and attend the University of Kansas. I am also the oldest of 14 kids and my parents reside in Stilwell, Kansas. Recently due to COVID and the stay at home order, the law firm I work for had to be closed and the attorneys all had to start working from home. Because of this, I did not have any work to do from the end of March until the beginning of May.

I had never applied for unemployment before so I did so in April once I found out that I could. I applied and then completed several weekly claims. I did not get any answer back on these claims. I was confused about the meaning of one of the questions and figured I had answered it incorrectly and that was why I hadn't been approved. I went to the Kansas Department of Labor website and called the 4 different numbers listed on the website. Each one said "all agents are busy. Call back in an hour" and then it would hang up. So I then emailed many of the different email addresses on the website and did not get a response. I then hand wrote two letters and mailed them to see if I could get a response. I tried calling many times afterwards but alas, I never spoke to a human and kept getting the same automated machine.

I got in the mail two letters that said the "candidate has not been disqualified" and an additional paperwork asking about my schooling on May 3rd. I filed my weekly claims back in April.

I tried once again to call and still got the same message. I finally received an email back with the same paperwork asking about my schooling and at the bottom of the email told me to not to email that address again.

As of today, I have yet to hear anything about my application. I am still a student at KU and have been applying for many jobs to supplement my income but have not received any word back from employers.

Please feel free to contact me anytime about my experiences.

Thanks for your time,

/s/ Izabella Borowiak-Miller

Izabella Borowiak-Miller

Joy I. Schreckhise
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My unemployment benefits exhausted March 25th. Prior to expiring I spent many days trying to contact unemployment finally after hours on hold a woman came on. I asked the process for federal extensions. She said I don't qualify. I explained again federal. She said we don't have that and was reading from an outdated script as 2 weeks prior Kansas received federal guidance but she said the Department of Labor was still waiting for it. Basically zero knowledge of unemployment. After my benefits were exhausted I tried again to reach unemployment. Finally I got a young man. He told me that the information I received from KWCH news was false and said he would transfer me to a specialist who would tell me the same as.

My question was that the FPUC was implemented on the 23rd and for anyone who filed Sunday or Monday would not receive it that week, which was my last week. But people who filed Wednesday or Thursday would receive it that week. So I asked him, does that mean the \$600 can only be attached to a current payment. He said nobody was getting it and the news was lying. He said I was being argumentative. I asked if I could file an extension for the federal program, he said Kansas doesn't participate in that program. And I said can I at least apply and he hung up on me.

It is difficult enough to be in this situation and you do all the research in the world, spend days, weeks getting a hold of unemployment and then they can't answer any question or have poor information. Being left in the dark is the hardest part. Fear and anxiety set in and you have nowhere to turn. For me I have no family and I live alone. What do I tell the landlord where I am going to live? How do I pay for a phone to keep trying unemployment?

Then the DOL said all back payments on Friday 8th and 9th will go out, Delia Garcia promised. And extensions coming at the end of month ok the 3 weeks owed of 600 I can do this till extension kicks in. But then it turns out that the 600 has to be attached to a current deposit.

Thankfully, Facebook has support groups and you can learn what others have learned by having the fortune of speaking to a live agent at unemployment with legitimate knowledge of unemployment. And that the IT team is working on a code for recipients of back pay though no anticipated date available. So again we are left in the dark with no way of knowing what's to come and though the time table is set for extension there are no directives as usual a vague statement, do we apply? Do we call? What's the criteria? We don't know how or when to pay our bills or do we start packing. Then the anxiety kicks in and we are frozen with fear and discontentment leaning on each other, strangers sharing the same sinking boat drifting to sea.

Occasionally a wave pushes us towards shore when suddenly a huge wind pushes us further away. All we want are life jackets so we can have a fighting chance.

A lot of us were Christmas layoffs, our struggles consisted of the holidays and a slow reemployment and just as our phones were beginning to ring for interviews covid attacked and the state shut down. Before we knew it our unemployment was gone because we filed a few days before the state unemployment extension was implemented. Yet we share the same crisis. And now due to covid the return to our original employer is a distant hope all but lost. Even workforce closed. We depleted fuel expenses, and many were unable to pay phone bills. How do we rebuild without the resources or tools?

When I asked to speak to a supervisor, the first representative I talked to emailed them to call me, I never heard back. When I called back and said I asked for a supervisor she said, I see that notation and the supervisor responded, "I'm not calling her back because I don't have an answer."

Unemployment needs to be honest and transparent. At the beginning of all this Delia Garcia did a Facebook interview Q&A once a week. She stopped because, "some people were angry and hurtful." Understandably for some the help was too late and for others no help has come to date. Regardless it is Delia Garcia's responsibility to be informative, honest, and transparent. And that has not been the case since someone hurt her feelings. 1% of the population of 25% unemployment.

Moreover, the unemployment percentage is grossly inaccurate. For example my neighbor lost his job and was denied. He is like many who accepted his fate and let it go. However in the scenario he gave me which would have matched what he told them he shouldn't have been denied. Some are uneducated unaware there is an appeal process or follow ups are warranted. Prior to the pandemic, UI would send you a directive letter. They are no longer doing this.

Thankfully he has family helping him, some have spouses and some are increasing the homeless population. When they otherwise could have had their situation resolved. 90% of the denied have never received an explanation letter. I implore you to visit Facebook groups for unemployment support groups and exhausted unemployment support groups and everyone share the same commonality. Denied, what does this mean? People should get those answers from unemployment. If they had, there would be no need to rely on each other. This is the true meaning of "in this together." It disgusts me when politicians and wealthy advertise this, and Facebook messenger sends a generic reply "we are all in this together" and no real human ever follows up.

Joy I. Schreckhise

Dear Madam Chair Senator Julia Lynn, Vice-Chair Senator Larry Alley and Minority Chair Senator Tom Holland and honorable members of the Commerce Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony regarding my experiences with the Kansas Department of Labor. My name is Kelly Meigs. I live in Shawnee, Kansas at 6413 Lakecrest Drive. I first became unemployed in August 2019. I found my current position in December 2019. During this time, I exhausted all 16 weeks of eligibility. When the state faced the Covid crisis and was placed in stay at home orders, I was furloughed from my position. Due to my exhausted benefits, I was not eligible for state unemployment benefits, however with the Cares Act I was eligible for the PEUC. This is the federal 13-week extension. I have attempted to call the KDOL numerous of times and only spoken to a representative 3 times. Each time, I have been told different and contradicting information.

Call #1 I was put in a cue for a call back phone call. I received this in about 4-5 hours. The representative had difficulty finding my place of employment. I was told my information was placed in the system and I should be hearing from them within the next week. I was told that I should file weekly claims online and would be paid back pay when the system was updated.

Call #2- I was a bit concerned about my employment status since the first representative had difficulty finding it. I called my HR to confirm and was told we were a part of the county but had our own federal id. I called again and was put back into a cue for a call back. I received my call back and this representative had the same difficulty finding my employer. After being placed on hold multiple times, she said she was able to locate it. She told me she updated my information and was told I would be receiving a determination letter in the next few days. She said to call back if I didn't receive it in the next week.

Call #3- After 2 weeks had passed and I had not received a determination letter, I decided I would call back to check on the status. It took me over a week to get back into the system to receive another call back phone call. This representative took my information again. I asked why it was so difficult to flip a switch for those who were already in the system. She said the system wouldn't allow her to do that. It needed to be reprogramed. I could hear her typing on her keyboard. After several minutes, she told me that she didn't know why I was told I would get a determination letter and if I did it wouldn't be for 8-10 weeks. She was not a benefits expert. Her current position was with audits. The information she was giving out came from the DOL website or their Facebook page. She was not given much direction from any supervisors. She said that the 13-week federal extension was the last to be implemented and should be completed by the end of May. She told me if I was eligible, I would receive back pay. I asked if she could tell me if I was eligible and she told me she didn't know and that would be determined at a later date. I asked her how that would be communicated and she said to watch the website and Facebook pages. She thought we would be receiving a letter.

I was greeted by courteous representatives. I do not think they are given the training needed to answer our questions. We have the same information or even more since we have the time to do our research. It is a shame these representatives are put into a position where they can't do their job adequately because they aren't given the correct information to share with the public. When they have to resort to their own website and Facebook for information is a travesty.

I joined several unemployment Facebook groups and all feel the same frustration and have negative communication with the representatives. Some are facing evictions, continued unemployment, failure to pay bills, pay for medication and basic needs such as feeding their families. I can provide you with more testimonies if necessary but understand our time restraints.

Thank you for your time for me to share my experiences. I hope you can find a resolution to this issue so Kansas families can provide for their own.

Unemployment Testimony
Senate Commerce Committee

Kevin Fishburn
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I worked for years and got let go last day of October 2019 along with a bunch of other employees. Filed for unemployment November 2, 2019. Everything went smooth till the Coronavirus arrived and any work at all just stopped.

My unemployment run out the first week in March 2020. The state passed SB-27 that said anyone that filed before 1/1/2020 was not eligible for state extensions. Then the Cares Act was signed in to law. Well the state has not open all the Federal programs of this bill. This in turn has a lot of Kansan families hurting, some with kids with extra needs. No money for months and months and if wasn't for family and friends they would be living under bridges.

Don't forget everyone was ordered to quarantine, so these people didn't even have a chance. As I type this email there still problems in getting all Federal programs going. It doesn't seem right when there issuing 600.00 a week extra when some can't even get extended unemployment benefits to make it.

Just today (May 12) the DOL changed the date for PEUC extension from end of May till the middle of June. I don't know how they expect these people to exist as that's an apply date. Not a pay date, Unbelievable.

Thanks for your time.

Kevin Fishburn

**Unemployment Testimony
Senate Commerce Committee**

Laura L Sanchez
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To Whom It May Concern:

I have never in my 53 years experienced the level of frustration that I have with KDOL at this moment. As a self-employed entrepreneur, I have NEVER had to rely on my government for unemployment benefits until last year after the closing of the school where I was employed. I received unemployment in July and August of last year to tide me over until I could begin my own school in September of 2019. I invested over \$15,000 in that business along with the blood, sweat and tears that goes along with it. The dedication of a good teacher takes many hours in preparation, instruction and one-on-one with her students. I may have a small school, but I believe I am making a large impact in the lives of my students. The students at my school have had a particularly rough go of it as they were students at two schools that closed suddenly in the past two years. I was determined that they would have a peaceful, engaging, "normal" school year.

Enter the Corona virus and the eventual closing of public and private schools per Governor Kelly. I was dismayed that, again, my students would have to have an interrupted school year. Thinking that it would be a short closing, I thought we could weather that and then be able to meet soon. All of my students' parents are self-employed and I had no idea the economic damage that was about to be unleashed. I assured them that they would not have to make tuition payments if that was a financial burden and since they were paying in arrears they weren't really behind at that point. But it has now been over 9 weeks and I see no way that I will see any payments until we begin again in the fall. I had budgeted, and allowed the parents to break up tuition over 12 months instead of 9 months to make it easier on them and to be able to pay my salary throughout the summer so that I could work on curriculum and materials for the next school year. Well, sad to say, that plan is busted!

Our last week of school was March 9th and then we had Spring Break. We were to return on the 18th only to be given the stay-at-home order by Governor Kelly. My school is a Montessori school that is, at its core, hands-on and interactive. We attempted to do emailed lesson plans and Spring projects. It is very difficult to instruct students that need special accommodations and direct contact instead of distance learning. As soon as I realized that this was going to affect my families and my finances I called the SBA and KDOL. I followed the directions of the KDOL and filled out my claim and could see that there was a little over \$2400 left in my account from the last school where I was employed. I figured that it would take a little time for my claim to be processed as they had opened it up to self-employed persons as well. I had no idea that it was

going to take over 9 weeks to handle my claim and HUNDREDS of unanswered calls, hang-up messages and waiting on the queue only to be disconnected.

So as of May 12th, I see that I have two payments and a partial payment coming that exhausts what was left in my account. My direct deposit information has been on file since July of last year, so there was no reason that I should not have had had a payment. I cannot reach a human to find out why I still don't have any of the money that was in the account. Today, I actually made it in the queue on hold, "I thought, Oh My Lord, I'm going to get to talk to an actual person!" So when the canned recording stopped and it sounded like the line picked up... are you kidding me? I was disconnected. I immediately redialed and got the same message I have heard for weeks. Call back later. Really, when I can't make my mortgage, pay my car payment? The "unintended consequence" of flattening the curve has flattened the economy. Great job. To hear that Governor Kelly was not aware that there was any problem with the phone calls to KDOL was very telling. Let me say it again...for NINE WEEKS. I've called every number at KDOL, left messages at the offices of Broderick Henderson, David Haley, Senator Roberts and finally reached James at Senator Moran's office. Then I remembered that I used to attend church with Scott Schwab. Thank you Scott Schwab for answering me immediately and forwarding my message along!

I was not even worried about the extra Federal money at the time. But after after 9 weeks, no stimulus check and an almost empty bank account, I cannot for the life of me figure out what has taken so long. I have never been one for a "handout" as I have worked in a family business since I was 13 years old. But for the life of me, if the government is going to close my business, order me to stay at home for my "safety," then they darn well be willing and ABLE to take up the slack. I know there are millions of people that are unemployed and I feel their pain. But, for the love of God we can't be on "hold" for ever.

As far as I can tell, my account is seriously screwed up. It appears that they used my regular unemployment monies to pay the FPUC which exhausted the account. I was told on the 18th of March that there was money in my account and that I would get my weekly amount and that there should not be a hold even if I was self-employed. As of today, KDOL has made my account "inactive" and instructed me to fill out the PUA form and send in documents. It is doubtful that I will get any back pay or extension of benefits. This is truly a cluster and the KDOL should be ashamed that they have left so many Kansans without. I hope that I have not lost my business and that my students will be able to return in the fall and that my investment will not have been in vain. I hope that I will be able to continue my passion for teaching in MY school, that I have worked so hard to maintain. I am currently finishing the year out for my students without pay, because they are worth it!

I sincerely hope that KDOL can get it together. Thank you for listening to my story.

Sincerely,

Laura L Sanchez

Unemployment Testimony Senate Commerce Committee

Linda Anderson

Thank you for the opportunity to share the unemployment experience with Commerce committee.

I started calling to KSDOL in mid to late March 2020. I have made 100's of phone calls to KSDOL on all published numbers. The phone calls have not been answered or have been disconnected. The last few weeks the recording directs you to just "call back in 1 hour". Only one time have I been able to get a call back and not until May 6th.

Starting around the end of March, I began checking my account on KSDOL website. When the site was not down or crashed, I was occasionally able to get on and see that my account said NOT ELIGIBLE TO FILE. That's it - nothing else -- just that screen -- and from there you cannot proceed any further in the process or get any additional instructions.

After calling for approximately 6 weeks, got ahold of a so-called "benefit specialist" at KSDOL on May 6 2020. I started the conversation by explaining that had been calling since mid-March and this is first time getting thru to talk to someone - so I appreciated his patience in advance with assistance in filing for benefits. The process of calling on 5/6/20 took about 3.5 hours including calling, being put on hold, transferred and then talking to someone that said a "Benefit Specialist" would have to call me back, and then having a KSDOL "Benefit Specialist" call me back for a 30 minute phone call. The result of the conversation was zero helpful information. The KSDOL so-called "Benefit Specialist" was rude, had no compassion, refused to transfer to supervisor, could not answer any questions, and could not provide any assistance. The "Benefit Specialist" could not do anything to change my account status from NOT ELIGIBLE TO FILE or provide any instructions as how to proceed. I was told that despite the inability to get thru on phone system since late March, I should call back in a few weeks because "there is nothing that can be done".

I exhausted 16 weeks of unemployment in 2019 and should qualify for PEUC and PUA due to having both W-2 wages and self-employment income. My account from March to date states NOT ELIGIBLE TO FILE. Originally, we were told by KSDOL in a publication "What You Need To Know About The New Legislation" dated 4/9/2020 that PEUC is payable before all others CARES Act programs. The publication was incomplete, confusing, and gave no direction.

Around mid-April I heard that FPUC (\$600) would start on 4/22 along with the 13 week extension for people who already exhausted benefits. At that same time, I heard PUA would start around the first of May. (KWCH/Topeka) The order of implementation was FPUC, then PEUC, then PUA.

About 48 hours later we were told that PUA would be implemented before PEUC.

Then we started getting instructions and Facebook videos from Secretary Garcia saying we should GO AHEAD AND FILE so you can get denied. We were told that the first step is to file for PUA (or something) and get denied!!! Well, my account says NOT ELIGIBLE TO FILE. Secretary Garcia apparently doesn't even understand how the website works!!! All the while, you can't get anyone from KSDOL on the phone to ask a question or get direction. The miscommunication and complete lack of effective direction from start to present has been mind-boggling.

On April 30th, we were treated to a KSDOL Publication entitled "MAY is going to be a Great Month for Kansans" informing that PUA applications would now be delayed until May 12, PUA payments would start May 25th and the PEUC extension would now be delayed until "Late May". Now it is my understanding that implementation for PEUC is moved back to "mid-June". I can assure you that May is not going to be a great month for tens of thousands Kansans that are having to deal first with unemployment and second with the KSDOL.

On Mother's Day, we were treated to a Happy Mother's Day post from KSDOL. I can assure you that many mothers and single moms did not have a Happy Mother's Day going without any payment from KSDOL. The tone of these communications is offensive to many waiting on payment from KSDOL.

On May 12th, when the PUA applications opened - the website continued to crash.

So the CARES Act was signed into law at the end of March and Federal funding was provided for FPUC, PEUC, and PUA to help people that became unemployed due to Covid-19. I have not received one dime of this money. I can't even file a claim because it says "NOT ELIGIBLE TO FILE". The money is available from the Federal government and I don't think that waiting until the middle of June to even be able to FILE A CLAIM is what was intended by the passage of the CARES ACT. There might be a lot of other people out there in the great state of Kansas just like me who can't file, so who knows how many claims are out there! Perhaps instead of filming videos about what "Great Things KSDOL Did In Their First 100 Days" you might have spent some time on upgrading the IT system, putting out some decent instructions for people like me, or maybe even filing claims. We are sick and tired of excuse after excuse, wrong information, vague instructions (or no instructions at all), phone systems that don't get answered, websites that don't work, backpay that is owed, and in general payments that are messed up, delayed, or in some other way screwed up. I think people from the top down need to be held accountable for what a fiasco this has been in the State of Kansas. Not one dime and can't even apply until mid-June???? The whole situation is completely unacceptable.

Regards,
Linda Anderson

Unemployment Testimony Senate Commerce Committee

I just wanted to share my story with you and my growing frustrations with the KDOL. I am a single mother of 3 kids at home. We have been “staying at home” Practicing our “safe distancing” for close to 2 months now.

I started a job the beginning of this year after leaving my husband due to his alcoholism in August of last year. It was a part-time job but it was perfect. My last day I was able to work was March 13th of this year. I worked that day, picked my kids up from their school and we haven't been able to return to work or school since then due to COVID-19. I was told by my employer that we couldn't return back to work the following Monday because the building we were working out of (the K-State Innovation Campus in Olathe, KS) would be closing down due to COVID and they weren't sure when we'd be able to return.

My kids' school also never resumed and we began the distance learning at home. I am their primary caretaker, so I became responsible for teaching them and making sure they didn't get behind. I have no other source of income. The part time job was it.

I applied for unemployment but was not eligible because I didn't work last year and had no reported wages from the last 4 quarters. I started my job on January 16th of this year. I have filed my weekly claim every week and still have yet to receive a dime. I haven't even been able to get my stimulus check. I am just honestly beginning to lose hope here. How can one go months with no income whatsoever? I've been able to have family help out somewhat, but they are tapped out themselves.

I waited on hold for 2 hours a few Saturday's ago to speak to an actual rep from KDOL on the phone because I needed to KNOW something. I needed to have some kind of hope that I wasn't being completely forgotten and looked over and that money would be coming. After waiting 2 hours I was told by someone who probably just started working for KDOL to help with the calls that “I can't really tell you anything. Just keep filing your weekly claim and hopefully something will come up for you.” That. Was. It.

I realize it wasn't their fault. They were just giving me the info they had. I just need some help. If this PUA and FPUC is to help people in these hard times why am I not receiving any help? I truly feel forgotten and not sure what my kids and I are supposed to do?

Thank you for taking the time to read my story. I am hoping to hear some sort of good news very soon. I desperately need it.

Sincerely,
Lindsey Wright

Unemployment Testimony
Senate Commerce Committee

Mindi Fisher
316-665-2398

I have been unemployed since April 7th, 2020. I have never been through the unemployment process before and have yet to receive a single dime from unemployment. I was laid off from Spirit Aerosystems under a WARN notice on February 7th, 2020. I received my regular check until April 7th, 2020.

On April 7th, I applied for unemployment. I've filled out all of the necessary paperwork which I have emailed and faxed several times to the Department of Labor. I've been able to talk to a real person one time on April 23rd, I have not been able to get through before or since despite 300 calls a day. They state the issue is some type of separation pay. I never received separation pay, I received my regular pay check until my official separation from the company on April 7th. Because of this, I have been sent to the dismal endless hole that is the adjudication department. I've read that I will be waiting 8-12 weeks for a reply. My family and I can't survive 8-12 weeks, something needs to be done about this process. This wasn't even my mistake, yet I am the one worrying about what bills I will be able to pay.

If you could bring up the lack of response and the timeline for the adjudication department and ask what the actual timeline is (there are no definite time periods from KDOL listed). Or light a fire under them to get past claims dealt with, I'd greatly appreciate it. If you need any copies of the documentation I've sent with dates, times and responses that lead nowhere, I will happily supply them.

Thank you,

Mindi Fisher

Unemployment Testimony Senate Commerce Committee

To whom it may concern:

I have been a KS citizen my entire life. I have worked and filed taxes in this state since I was 15 years old. I just started a business in the last year, and hence have become "self employed". I not only run my hardwood floor business, but I am also a personal contracted Childcare provider. We work hard.

We have received absolutely \$0 since COVID began in aid both state and federal. We have been out of work for over 2 months. I was laid off in my position as a contracted Childcare provider due to the pandemic, and my hardwood floor company has had supply interruptions and nearly no business since mid-March.

Luckily we had a savings account, all of which is completely drained at this point. I am also ineligible for the stimulus as are my children, even though we are US citizens and were born here. This is due to a loophole in the bill that states if you are married to an immigrant, you are no longer qualified.

So even though we all pay taxes, and my kids and I are citizens, we are being told we are less than everyone else. We are not worthy of help.

My unemployment that is helping damn near every other state in our nation, is a complete and utter joke here in KS. It is frustrating. It is depressing. It is completely unacceptable that this is allowed to continue in our state and country. I cannot be the only one whose family is in this position.

We are not less. We are important. We are contributors to our state. We have lived here all our lives, but I am beyond frustrated with the way this situation was handled by those in charge. WE HAVE TO GET THE MONEY WE ARE OWED. We cannot continue to survive like this.

Signed,

A 3rd district citizen who is fed up
Nique Leonel

**Unemployment Testimony
Senate Commerce Committee**

Peggy A Hopkins
331 E Quivira Circle
Kechi, Ks 67067
316-210-3344

Dear Commerce Committee:

My name is Peggy Hopkins. My last day of work was March 29 of this year. I started calling the Unemployment Dept that week. The line was either busy or they gave information then told me everyone was busy so call back in an hour. Eventually, I was assigned to call on Tuesday or Thursday. I was encouraged but nothing changed. Many calls made, 6-10 per day. I tried to sign in on computer but it would not go thru and told me to call the same phone number for assistance. No response.

The next week I continued calling and finally from frustration emailed Deb Farris, anchor for KAKE, Channel 10, Wichita, She responded the same day with a suggestion to email Senator Wagle. I continued calling and trying to get thru on the computer. I would correctly complete the form several times and the response is they would send email to confirm who I was. No emails and no ability to get through on the phone. I started calling the Wichita, Topeka and Kansas City offices.

On Friday May 9 Kansas City office answered and said I could talk with someone about my computer difficulties. A very nice gentleman fixed my computer problem. He amazingly transferred me to a gentleman who could complete my application. This gentleman had a non-Kansas accent and was polite but finally as frustrated as I was, as I had a great deal of problem understanding his speech. The time took approximately 45 mins for fixing the computer and the application. He had to tell me in closing about the rules and after the third time, I just agreed with him. I hoped to get a letter this week with information that I thought he had said he would mail. No letter as of Tuesday mail.

Times and dates have eluded me but the story is correct. I do have some emails that I have to confirm some of my attempts to complete my application. There was a second email to Deb Farris. She has been really helpful.

Thank you for assisting Kansas citizens.

Peggy A Hopkins

Unemployment Testimony Senate Commerce Committee

Tamara Joyce
Manhattan, KS

My name is Tamara Joyce, I reside in Manhattan, Kansas. I originally filed for unemployment in November of last year, when my employer of 20+ years decided to retire. We were given 2 weeks notice of his plan, and while he did sell his Dental practice, I was not rehired due to the new doctor bringing in her own assistant.

To begin with, that is a very bad time for a job search, as many offices close during the holidays and then after the new year while I continuously sent out resumes and went on interviews, the pandemic came into play. I was offered a job, but my start date would have been the end of April, the first week of April I got the call that the offer was being rescinded due to the pandemic which was forcing them to close. My benefits ended on March 28th.

Since SB 27 only increased benefit weeks to those initially filing after Jan 1, 2020, that left me with only the Federal Cares Act 13 week extension with the additional \$600 weekly boost, which at the time I was extremely grateful to be able to qualify for this, as I have been repeatedly told that there was little chance of being hired until the fall. I have continued to file weekly claims, while waiting for this (PEUC) to go into effect.

I did nothing but sit on the phone for 3 weeks trying to contact KDOL to get information on a time frame or if I needed to do anything else to qualify. After finally reaching a live person, who had no clue and did not know any answers to my questions, instead of this person showing any compassion or even saying she has no idea, she got very defensive and told me that maybe I should just get a job instead of waiting for the state to bail me out and hung up. To say I was very offended by this statement goes without saying.

I have worked continuously since I was in high school, even though I had gone through a couple of times where I could have filed for unemployment, I never have before now. I have always believed that as long as I was able to work that it is my responsibility to provide for my family. I am 58 years old and this is the first time that I had no other choice, my youngest son is in college and I had lost my oldest son to suicide 3 months before I lost my job. These things had already eaten away at almost all of my savings.

Due to all of this KDOL has no excuse for treating people this way or for failing the people of Kansas the way that they have. It's now mid May and I still have no idea when I will begin to get benefits, they have lied to reporters, continuously give updates on their websites that they do not follow through on and treat us as if we are parasites on the system.

People can not pay their bills, much less feed their families because of their ineptitude to do their jobs in a timely manner and most importantly, be able to communicate truthfully. I have had to make so many cutbacks I'm barely surviving. I've had to let my health insurance drop, which means I've had to discontinue my medications that I can no afford, as well as discontinue the grief counseling that I was going to in order to cope with the loss of my son.

This is no longer acceptable and we need answers and for Delia Garcia to step up and be accountable. We need to feed our families!! People are getting desperate.

Thank you for your time and understanding.

Sincerely,

Tamara Joyce

Dear Commerce Committee Members,

My name is Jesse McGrath, I live in Wichita, KS. My entire adult life I've been employed until now. That's 16yrs of employers paying into the Kansas Unemployment program where up until now I have never filed an unemployment claim.

I was let go March 12th and was told by my employer to file for benefits. I filed March 19th and had to submit the same paperwork 4 times in regards to severance pay and my "availability" to work. I sat from March 19th until May 6th knowing absolutely nothing, calling 1000's of times per week to never get through.

I received a call back from the KDOL today (5/12/2020) saying I was eligible for the week ending in 3/22 then they determined I was ineligible for benefits from 3/23-4/18 because of my severance package which was 2 weeks of pay. This decision allows the KDOL to not pay me \$600 in federal relief for at least 1 week.

I'm not sure how this all works, but I can say that the KDOL has dropped the ball in their response to this. Their lack of preparation and timely response to this matter put myself and countless other Kansans in jeopardy of falling behind on our monthly payments. On top of their lack of response, I was told today that their "system can only pay out \$75million per not and due to this I will not be receiving the extra \$600 payment this week and also they cannot tell me when I will be receiving it. I've worked 40+ hours a week for 16yrs and the time when Kansans like myself need these benefits, We're left in the dark, knowing nothing, in fear of falling behind on our bills, figuring out how to feed my 5kids and a wife. This is unacceptable.

Thank you,

Jesse McGrath
Wichita, Kansas