

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 3, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Office of the Governor-State of Texas
P.O. Box 1248
Austin, TX 78711-2428

Dear Governor Abbott:

As Texans work to defeat the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), workers who lose their jobs must be a top priority. Due to a slow federal response by the Trump Administration, the strongest tool that we now have to ensure the health and safety of millions of Americans is social distancing, which means businesses cannot operate as normal and a health crisis is now a jobs crisis. Last week, over 6 million American workers requested unemployment insurance, the largest one-week spike in U.S. history.

While social distancing is a public health imperative, state officials must also step up to ensure the capacity and effectiveness of the social safety net to ensure workers are able to claim their Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) when they need it the most. TWC is receiving \$88 million in relief as a result of emergency Congressional stimulus in the CARES Act. Over the past few weeks, many Texans have turned to the TWC to apply for UI benefits with 150,000 claims processed in the 3rd week of March alone. Yet, many of our constituents still have trouble contacting a TWC representative, and the best time to submit an application right now is between 1-6AM. More staff and resources are needed to guarantee our UI system can handle the increased numbers of applicants.

We appreciate the work TWC has done so far to increase capacity by adding 200 tax auditors and new hires to TWC's unemployment division and building up the bandwidth of the TWC website. We urge you to accelerate these necessary actions and match the demand for services with an equal supply of resources. Unemployment insurance is worker's last hope to pay rent, utility bills, and just survive. By adding additional staff and resources, Texans will be able to more easily contact a TWC representative, get answers to their questions, and alleviate some of their financial burden.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. We look forward to working with you to serve every Texas worker in need during the coronavirus pandemic.

Sincerely,



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

Additional Co-signers:

Representative Sheila Jackson Lee
Representative Lizzie Fletcher
Representative Lloyd Doggett
Representative Sylvia R. Garcia
Representative Veronica Escobar
Representative Filemon Vela
Representative Colin Allred
Representative Vicente Gonzalez
Representative Al Green
Representative Marc Veasey