



PRESS RELEASE

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Bold Action Urgently Needed at Employment Department to Clear March Backlog

SALEM, Ore. – House Majority Leader Barbara Smith Warner (D-Portland) issued the following statement on the backlog of unemployment claims at the Oregon Employment Department:

“Over the last two months, frontline workers at the Oregon Employment Department have worked hard to process an unprecedented number of unemployment claims under trying, stressful conditions. I’m grateful for all the work these essential workers have done to protect and support families across the state during this time of uncertainty.

“However, for far too many Oregonians, the wait for unemployment checks and the economic upheaval that comes with that has gone on for too long. We are hearing each day from our neighbors who are fed up and scared about the road forward. They have spent countless hours waiting on the phone and sending emails, and despite having filed a claim months ago, have not received the payments they are due. It is beyond time for these claims to be met with action.

“Bold action, that also protects the health and safety of agency staff, is needed from the leadership at the Employment Department, now more than ever. We are in unprecedented times - relying on the old ways of doing things will only lead to further delays for vulnerable families. Reforms that could have immediate results include allowing some agency staff to work remotely, so that more workers are available to answer calls and emails during normal business hours, safely bringing on retired agency staff who have the expertise to handle the most complicated, time-consuming cases, and expanding transparency and proactive communications to filers and the public.

“Oregonians are struggling – they need action and they need it now.”

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