

Hwang Asks State Officials for Status of Unemployment Claims



State Senator Tony Hwang and the entire Senate Republican Caucus has sent a letter to Connecticut's Department of Labor making very specific requests for detailed information surrounding how the agency is handling the sharp surge in new unemployment claims.

"Unemployment applications have skyrocketed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic with the Governor's orders to close all non-essential businesses. I am hearing every day from constituents who have been trying to get in touch with the Connecticut Department of Labor, are worried about the status of their claim and are depending on a response to be able to provide for themselves and their families," said Hwang, who serves Connecticut's 28th District, which includes the towns of Easton, Fairfield, Newtown, Westport, and Weston.

The letter sent April 20 included the following asks:

1. A summary of the 60,000 claim test performed on April 15, 2020,
2. How many claims have been processed since the system upgrades were implemented,

3. How many outstanding claims remain,
4. Whether or not the Department remains on track to begin distributing the additional weekly \$600 benefit in federal stimulus funds by April 24th
5. Whether or not Department remains on track to begin the new benefit program for self-employed individuals by April 30th
6. A timeline for processing claims over the phone.
7. A timeline for being able to address case specific questions over the phone.

Earlier this week, Gov. Lamont announced that there were soon-to-be-implemented technological upgrades at the DOL which will reduce the six week processing time to a single week.

Hwang said that “while the tech upgrades are a positive step to improving this situation, that is not enough. “I have spoken with countless people who are not able to apply for benefits themselves because they are not able to access a computer or the internet. I have others with questions about their claims who need to talk to someone. What steps are the Department and the administration taking to make this process smoother in Connecticut?”

“We are all facing major changes to our daily lives as we adapt to a new reality during this unprecedented health crisis. It’s a challenging time fraught with fear and uncertainty. It’s imperative that Connecticut’s workers have access to information and personnel handling if, when and how their next paycheck may arrive. The public health concerns are eclipsed with financial concerns when your return to work is unknown. I offer my services if they are needed in making the necessary changes to get the unemployment system operational, said Hwang. “Working together is the only way to overcome this pandemic health and economic upheaval.”