



Advisory Neighborhood Commission 1C
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anc1c.org
Representing Adams Morgan

May 17, 2021

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Daniel W. Lucas, Inspector General
Inspector General Office
717 14th St NW
5th Floor
Washington, DC 20005
Sent by attachment to email to oig@dc.gov

RE: Resolution in support of DC Audit of the Department of
Employment Services

Dear Inspector General Lucas,

At a duly-noticed public meeting held on 5/5/2021, with a quorum present, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 1C voted 8-0-0 in favor of the attached resolution in support of an audit of the Department of Employment Services (DOES), Office of Unemployment Insurance.

Warm regards,

Amir Irani
Chairperson, ANC 1C

cc: Marie Hart, Principal Deputy Inspector General; marie.hart@dc.gov
Hon. Japer Bowles, Commissioner 1C07; 1c07@anc.dc.gov



ANC 1C Resolution in SUPPORT of Audit of the Department of Employment Services, Office of Unemployment Insurance

Whereas, starting March 2020, the COVID-19 public health emergency has resulted in unemployment for thousands of District residents; and

Whereas, the federal government and the District of Columbia government have provided financial assistance and resources to unemployed individuals due to the COVID-19 Health Pandemic, with the District's local government tasked with distributing federal benefits to District residents/claimants; and

Whereas, the District of Columbia Department of Employment Services (DOES), Bureau of Economic Stability and Benefits, Office of Unemployment Insurance manages and oversees the District's unemployment benefits program and the leadership position for that Office is currently vacant¹; and

Whereas, as early as April 2020, District residents filing for unemployment benefits suffered significant delays in receiving unemployment benefits due to an outdated website (designed and built in the mid-90s) and insufficient DOES capacity to staff phone lines to answer questions and resolve delays;² and

Whereas, residents have reported persistent and long-running difficulties accessing benefits and challenges with DOES personnel competency and capacity that have delayed distribution of benefits, as well as ineffective/misleading communication from DOES that have further complicated and confused residents,^{3,4}; and

¹ DOES Organizational Chart (Updated February 2021)

https://does.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/does/page_content/attachments/DOES%20Org%20Chart%20-%20Program%20Names%20w%20Execs%20Feb%202021%20v4.pdf

² It's Like A Parachute That's Deploying After You Hit The Ground' | Here's The Struggle To Get Unemployment Benefits In Dc

<https://www.wusa9.com/article/entertainment/television/programs/get-up-dc/applicants-describe-struggle-to-get-unemployment-benefits-in-dc/65-bfe94ee7-5ceb-46b8-a50f-aa9a2a15b491>

³ Thousands Left With Unemployment Funds Due To Dc's 'outdated' Website

<https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/local/dc/dc-unemployment-website-left-thousands-waiting-almost-a-month-for-benefits/65-5e907af7-5fef-421f-b392-af69ca1c9596>

⁴ A Month Later, Some Dc Workers Still Can't Get Unemployment Benefits



Whereas, the DOES' most current Employment Overview Report (April 20, 2021) states that:

- The seasonally adjusted preliminary unemployment rate was 7.8 percent in March 2021, *a decrease of 0.3 percentage points* from the revised February 2021 rate.
- The number of employed District residents *increased by 200* from 375,200 in February 2021 to 375,400 in March 2021.
- The civilian labor force for the District *decreased by 1,500* from 408,400 in February 2021 to 406,900 in March 2021.
- The labor force participation rate *declined by 0.3 percentage points* from 69.9 percent in February 2021 to 69.6 percent in March 2021.⁵

Whereas, Director Dr. Unique Morris Hughes stated on April 20, 2021 that “[t]he District economy continues to show gains toward recovery.... Our top priority is ensuring Washingtonians have access to the resources and tools to help them secure sustainable work and achieve economic stability;” and

Whereas, DOES had to update its antiquated claims processing system to allow processing and disbursement of funds from President Joe Biden’s \$1.9 trillion stimulus bill, the American Rescue Plan Act, which was signed into law March 11, and Director Morris-Hughes announced on April 16, 2021 that the claims processing system updates related to this legislation were complete and claimants could start accessing benefits without interruptions⁶;

Whereas, DOES has continued to struggle with updating its claims processing system and still has not paid thousands of District residents benefits to which they are entitled for more than six weeks, which has caused extreme burden to those already unable to find employment or full employment;⁷ and

<https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/local/dc/dc-unemployment-website-issues-frustration/65-a814714d-616e-4c15-9158-b9f152423351>

⁵ DC Unemployment Rate at 7.8 Percent in March 2021 -

<https://does.dc.gov/release/dc-unemployment-rate-78-percent-march-0>

⁶ Some Laid Off D.C. Workers Should See Unemployment Benefits This Week After One Month Delay In Payments <https://washingtoncitypaper.com/article/514876/unemployment-payments-expected-to-resume-for-some-d-c-worker-s/>

⁷ Systems Update Interrupts Unemployment Benefits—Again

<https://washingtoncitypaper.com/article/512788/systems-update-interrupts-unemployment-benefits-again/>



Whereas, due to constant and severe gaps in financial assistance for residents, continued misguided or lack of communication from DOES, repeated attempts by the DC Council to rectify the program, and in consideration of the severity and urgency of this matter, residents have sought additional oversight; and

Whereas, the District of Columbia's Office of Inspector General's (OIG) mission is to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness, and to detect and deter fraud, waste and mismanagement throughout the government; and

Whereas, the responsibilities of the OIG include:

- initiating and conducting independent fiscal and management audits, inspections, and investigations of District government operations;
 - conducting other special audits, assignments, and investigations;
 - forwarding to the appropriate authorities evidence of criminal wrongdoing that is discovered as the result of any audit, inspection, or investigation conducted by the Office;
- and

Whereas, ANC 1C passed a version of this resolution in the ANC 1C Public Services and Environment Committee on April 28, 2021 ; and

Whereas, Councilmember Elissa Silverman announced on May 5, 2021 that the Office of the Inspector General will undertake an audit of DOES following months of issue with the city's unemployment program; and

Therefore, ANC 1C requests that the District of Columbia's Office of the Inspector General initiate a speedy and thorough audit, inspection, and/or investigation of DOES, to assess the program's vulnerabilities, potential waste and abuse, and process improvements, all in consideration of suggestions from residents.