

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515-4309

March 26, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Office of the Governor – State of Texas
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711- 2428

Dear Governor Abbott:

We are concerned about the capacity of the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) system for accepting and processing new unemployment insurance claims.

All our offices have heard from numerous constituents who have been unable to successfully apply for unemployment insurance benefits. This appears to be especially significant for those constituents lacking a computer and having to apply for benefits over the telephone.

Last week Congress passed, with overwhelming bipartisan support, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. This law sought to lay the groundwork for state unemployment offices to handle the new influx of claims and to expand coverage to as many people as possible who could be eligible under state law.

That law directed \$2 billion to state unemployment insurance programs and waived measures like work search requirements or waiting weeks to those either diagnosed with Covid-19, or those who have lost their jobs due to the spread of the virus. However, this was only an initial step.

Further expansion of the unemployment insurance system is a key piece of the third piece of emergency COVID-19 related legislation that is currently being considered in Congress. This is one of the most direct ways to protect workers and families who have lost their paychecks due to the closures necessary to combat the spread of COVID-19.

Therefore, the TWC's infrastructure for applying and paying benefits has never been more critical than it is now. We urge you to take all actions possible, including temporarily transferring staff from other state agencies where possible, to ensure that Texans impacted by this crisis can quickly apply for and receive unemployment insurance benefits.

We know these are incredibly difficult times for all Texans, those seeking unemployment assistance and those staffing the phones at TWC offices. We stand ready to assist you and the State of Texas in any way we can in the coming weeks as we weather this unprecedented crisis together.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress