



Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A

“Serving the Foggy Bottom and West End communities of Washington, D.C.”

May 28, 2020

Councilmember Elissa Silverman
Chair, Committee on Labor and Workforce Development
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 408
Washington, DC 20004
esilverman@dccouncil.us

**RE: DC Council Committee on Labor and Workforce Development’s
Upcoming Budget Oversight Hearing on the Department of Employment
Services**

Dear Councilmember Silverman,

At its regular meeting on May 20, 2020, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A (“ANC 2A” or “Commission”) considered the above-referenced matter. With seven of eight commissioners present, a quorum at a duly-noticed public meeting, the Commission voted unanimously (7-0-0), after a motion made by Commissioner Patel and seconded by Commissioner Harnett, to adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS, as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, new unemployment insurance claims in the District of Columbia, as of May 19, 2020, have reached an unprecedented level, with 100,588 new claims in just eight weeks,¹

WHEREAS, the Department of Employment Services (DOES) needs to immediately prioritize the long-delayed modernization and properly allocate funds so that unemployment benefits are processed and dispensed in a timely fashion,

WHEREAS, the DOES unemployment insurance portal operates on an antiquated website, best accessible to the public on severely outdated browser software, and with a need to rapidly scale the software, it failed, resulting in confusion and an overwhelmed hotline which resulted in wait times of as long as 11 hours,

WHEREAS, these challenges exacerbate anxiety among workers who are unable to access benefit payments and are unable to pay time-sensitive bills,

WHEREAS, the FY 2020 budget allotted \$46 million for the modernization of the unemployment insurance portal, but no part of that modernization was substantially complete before this crisis began,

¹ DC Preliminary Unemployment Insurance Claim Filings as of May 15, 2020. *Department of Employment Services*. May 17, 2020. https://twitter.com/DOES_DC/status/1263095023375126528



Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A

“Serving the Foggy Bottom and West End communities of Washington, D.C.”

WHEREAS, learning from the lessons of HealthCare.gov and the 2014 Veteran Affairs scandal, cities, states, and the federal government have created digital service response teams to rebuild and rethink public-facing government technology tools, and²

WHEREAS, if the District of Columbia had a team of technologists that had the authority to oversee and manage agency and cross-agency technology projects, challenges we have seen in scaling digital tools, like the DOES unemployment insurance portal, would be more resilient in future crises.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that ANC 2A urgently encourages the DC Council’s Committee on Labor and Workforce Development to develop a plan to prioritize the modernization of the DOES unemployment insurance system.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that ANC 2A urges the DC Council to introduce legislation to create a District Digital Service, outside of the Mayor’s Office or the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO), to address other longstanding government technology challenges before they need to be depended on in a crisis.

Commissioners Trupti Patel (2A03@anc.dc.gov) and Patrick Kennedy (2A01@anc.dc.gov) are the Commission’s representatives in this matter.

ON BEHALF OF THE COMMISSION.

Sincerely,

Patrick Kennedy
Chairperson

CC: Dr. Unique Morris-Hughes, Director, Department of Employment Services
Lindsey Parker, Chief Technology Officer of the District of Columbia
Chairman Phil Mendelson
Nicole Goines, Mayor’s Office of Community Relations and Services

² Mitchell, Billy. “How the U.S. Digital Service is helping during the coronavirus pandemic.” *Fedscoop*. April 23, 2020. <https://www.fedscoop.com/usds-digital-services-coronavirus-projects/>