

JOSH HARDER
10TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE

COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND LABOR

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

131 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-4540—PHONE
(202) 225-3402—FAX

4701 SISK ROAD, SUITE 202
MODESTO, CA 95356
(209) 579-5458—PHONE
(209) 579-5028—FAX

www.harder.house.gov

September 23, 2020

Sharon Hilliard
Director
California Employment Development Department
PO Box 826880, MIC 83
Sacramento, CA 94280-0001

Dear Director Hilliard,

I write today to urge you to overturn the sudden moratorium on all new unemployment claims—now a staggering 1.6 million¹—at the Employment Development Department (EDD) as well as get answers on what your agency will do to address the various issues plaguing the EDD.

From delays in processing claims, unanswered calls to fraud, the Strike Team’s report² revealed how broken the EDD is. What’s most disturbing is that your agency believes the answer to addressing these issues is to take two weeks off work and pause claims for that entire duration without warning. Delaying the report’s release and then attempting to bury it over the weekend³, rather than having a transparent accounting of the challenges EDD is facing, will not be permitted. Further, forcing Californians to wait for assistance is simply unacceptable. Now is not the time to turn our backs on the most vulnerable people, many of which lost their jobs through no fault of their own. **I urge you to reject this moratorium and take the necessary steps to ensure workers across California can rely on this assistance.**

The reports of the other issues plaguing your agency must be addressed. Please answer the following:

1. According to reports, your agency simply stops answering phone calls when you’ve reached capacity. What’s most alarming is that in some cases, it takes a person up to 6 weeks to receive a call back. What are you doing to remedy this issue and ensure callers are answered in a timely manner?
2. Offices like mine are on the phones with constituents that are still waiting on their benefits—some since March. By your own standards, you claim you will be out of

¹ *The Mercury News*, George Avalos, “[Coronavirus: EDD unemployment payments backlog worsens in recent months](#),” September 21, 2020

² *Cal Gov Ops*, [Recommendations to Set Path for Reform at the Employment Development Department](#), September 19, 2020

³ *The Sacramento Bee*, Editorial Board, “[Gov. Newsom buried EDD ‘strike team’ report. Can he fix California’s unemployment mess?](#),” September 21, 2020

backlog by January 27, 2021. That's more than four months away. What are you doing to provide support for workers who are relying on this assistance now?

The speed at which aid is sent to Californians will dramatically affect the recovery of our economy. I urge you again to take steps to improve your agency's broken system. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Josh Harder". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. The "J" and "H" are prominent and connected to the rest of the name.

Josh Harder
United States Representative (CA-10)