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April 10, 2020

The Honorable Julie A. Su
Secretary
California Labor and Workforce Development Agency
800 Capitol Mall, Suite 5000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Secretary Su:

Thank you for your work on behalf of working Californians during the unprecedented health and economic crisis our state is facing. As you are well aware, the outbreak of coronavirus and the sweeping disruptions to public life that are crucial to slowing its spread have disrupted work for Californians at a scale unseen in our state's history, placing new levels of strain on our Unemployment Insurance system with millions filing for assistance in the span of weeks.

I recognize the extraordinary volume of claims that the Employment Development Department (EDD) is now facing, and I am confident that you and your staff are working with all possible speed to process claims quickly, including those who the CARES Act made newly eligible for benefits. As you continue this work, I urge you to prioritize making the application for the new Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program publicly available as soon as possible.

I represent thousands of independent, freelance, contract, and gig workers—including many in the entertainment industry—who often do not fully qualify for standard unemployment benefits. The CARES Act, which was signed into law two weeks ago, dramatically expands unemployment coverage, and I led an effort in the House to extend this coverage to nontraditional and independent workers. As states are now working to implement these expanded federal benefits, I am hearing from many of my newly eligible constituents who are concerned because they are not yet able to apply and who are increasingly worried as their financial responsibilities continue to mount without anticipated income.

As you seek to do so, I also ask that the EDD update its coronavirus webpage daily, if possible, so that workers awaiting new benefits can know they are accessing up-to-date information. In addition, if you anticipate that the application for newly eligible workers will not be available by next week, EDD should also consider letting these workers create accounts and indicate their intent to apply so they can be notified as soon as the application is available. In doing so, you could also ensure they are fully informed and understand that benefits are available retroactively, and they will not miss out on assistance due to the delay in processing.

This is an unprecedented crisis, and I am grateful for your hard work to ensure every affected worker will have timely access to vital benefits. Thank you for your attention to my requests, and please let me know if there is any way I can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Adam B. Schiff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Adam" and last name "Schiff" being the most prominent parts.

Adam B. Schiff
MEMBER OF CONGRESS