

House Labor and Commerce Committee
Department of Labor and Workforce Development
Division of Employment and Training Services
Unemployment Insurance Program – COVID 19 Response
April 22, 2020

Staffing:

- Prior to the onset of COVID-19, we had 44 frontline call center staff and 7 supervisors
- We have requested and received approval for a total of 140 STNPs
 - a. We have brought back 27 retirees and former UI employees
 - b. Diverted staff from other units and programs
 - c. On boarding of additional staff from other sources: staffing agency, referrals, Workplace Alaska recruitments
 - i. Shortened training sessions occurring daily
 - ii. Challenges: CDC guidelines, training spaces, worker comfort

Workload:

- As of Monday, April 20, over 57,000 new claims filed since March 1, 2020
- As of Monday, April 20, just under 83 million in benefits paid out since March 1, 2020

Program Changes:

- HB 308
 - a. Work search waiver and registration changes – to production on April 3
 - i. Working on reversing previously denied issues
 - b. Waiting week waiver – to production on April 15
 - i. Retriggered all previously served waiting weeks on April 17, with payment disbursed on April 20, 2020
 - c. Dependent allowance - programming is challenging, not yet in production
- Federal Programs
 - a. Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation – extra \$600 to regular UI weekly benefit.
 - i. Went to production on April 10, first payments disbursed on Monday, April 13, first payable week was the week ending April 4.
 - b. Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) – benefits for self-employed, independent contractors, and gig economy workers.
 - i. Under contract with a vendor to implement stand-alone system to make these payments and accepting applications the week of April 20, 2020.
 - c. Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) – Extra 13 weeks of regular unemployment compensation
 - i. Working on the programming to add these weeks of compensation to those that have exhausted their regular benefits.

Other Enhancements:

- Single week filing – to production April 9, 2020. To get benefits out the door faster.

- Watson – Virtual chat feature – added to website on April 17. Live chat feature that answers questions about UI and the new federal programs.
- My Alaska help desk – partnership with DOA – help desk to troubleshoot issues filers may have with getting through MyAlaska to file a claim. Stood up on April 7, 2020

Funding

- Received 1.045 million upfront from USDOL for increased administrative costs due to workload
- Received 72 million upfront from USDOL to accommodate the additional \$600 weekly payment
- Submitted SBR for FPUC implementation costs
- Working on SBRs for PEUC and PUA