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September 15, 2020

Secretary W. Gerard Oleksiak
Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry
1700 Labor and Industry Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Secretary Oleksiak:

As you know, Pennsylvanians have experienced unprecedented hardships because of Gov. Tom Wolf's unilateral March 19, 2020, economic shutdown order that shuttered all non-life-sustaining businesses.

To date, nearly 4 million Pennsylvanians have filed for first time unemployment benefits because of this unprecedented closure of our economy, an all-time year-to-date high. In addition, Pennsylvania is currently shackled with the third worst unemployment rate in the country at 13.7 percent.

As a result of actions taken by the Wolf administration, Pennsylvanians have uniquely suffered economically from continued disruptions to business flow and supply chain issues created by ongoing government-mandated business limitations.

Many of these Pennsylvanians are the hardworking drivers of our economy that never anticipated needing to rely on the government to support their families.

Sadly, these very Pennsylvanians seeking the help of the Department of Labor and Industry's Office of Unemployment Compensation—often for the first time—have had their hardships met with unanswered calls, inappropriately denied or delayed benefits, and abysmal customer service.

As a member of the House Labor and Industry Committee, I have had the ability to question you and others from your department on how and why Pennsylvania's unemployment compensation system failed to deliver for the people of Pennsylvania.

Having heard from you multiple times, and understanding your support for the March 19, 2020, shutdown order, I continue to question how prepared the department was for a surge in Pennsylvania's unemployment rate and what coordination, if any, existed within the Wolf administration leading up to the issuance of the March 19, 2020, shutdown order to put plans in place to deal with millions of unemployed Pennsylvanians.

I write to you today hoping to continue our positive working relationship and avoid a formal Right-to-Know Law request. That said, please provide a response and supporting documentation to the following questions I have:

- 1) When did you first learn of the Governor's March 19, 2020, shutdown order?
 - a. Please provide any communications your department had with the Governor's Office about the March 19, 2020, shutdown order prior to and following the issuance of the order.
 - b. Please provide any communications your department had with the Department of Community and Economic Development about the March 19, 2020, shutdown order prior to and following the issuance of the order.
- 2) Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, was the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry involved in any emergency simulations that accounted for large spikes in unemployment? If so, please provide details and results of those exercises.
- 3) Provide, by state House District, the number of those seeking unemployment compensation due to COVID-19 and those that have not yet received a final benefits determination.

Please respond in writing with the requested information within ten business days of the date of this letter. Should you not respond in writing within that time, I will file a formal Right-to-Know request.

I would hope with your administration's self-avowed commitment to government transparency that such a request will not be necessary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kate A. Klunk", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rep. Kate A. Klunk
169th Legislative District
Pennsylvania House of Representatives