April 28, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor of the State of Texas
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

Dear Governor Abbott:

As you are aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused historically unprecedented layoffs and furloughs of working Texans, resulting in unemployment insurance applications from more than 1.4 million. Despite increased federal funding to assist with the administration of unemployment claims, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) has struggled to process and administer benefits in a timely manner. Too many Texans, desperate for financial support, are experiencing ongoing difficulties accessing the unemployment compensation system administered jointly by the U.S. Department of Labor and TWC. We are concerned that the TWC’s current verification requirements are making this problem worse.

In order to continue receiving unemployment insurance disbursements, an individual is required to request payment every two weeks through what is known as “certification” or “re-certification.” While this requirement can theoretically be completed online, for the many Texans still reporting online access difficulties, the only alternative is to reach TWC by phone, which remains exceedingly difficult, and which further delays payments that some have awaited for weeks.

Some workforce commissions in other states have temporarily waived this re-certification requirement. After waiver, the unemployed, all of whom have been previously approved for compensation, are still required to notify TWC if they return to work or report changes in earnings. Your support of a temporary waiver in Texas would help to ease the strain on both TWC, encouraging its more expeditious application processing, and on the many Texans currently forced to spend exasperating hours to get through phone lines and crashing online systems.

Accordingly, we respectfully urge you to request that the Texas Workforce Commission waive the two-week certification requirement for the duration of the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation programs.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress

Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress

Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress

Marc Veasey
Member of Congress

Filemon Vela
Member of Congress

Al Green
Member of Congress

Colin Allred
Member of Congress

Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress