

# New Jersey Senate



Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo  
Department of Labor  
1 John Fitch Plaza  
Trenton, NJ 08611

February 19, 2021

Dear Commissioner Asaro-Angelo:

As you are well aware, the pandemic has taken a punishing toll on so many of our fellow New Jerseyans.

Hundreds of thousands of hard-working residents are out of work. Many have seen their savings evaporate and their employers close their doors forever.

Through no fault of their own, these hard-working residents have been devastated by the economics of COVID, and to make matters worse, too many have been unable to get the help and the answers they desperately need from the Department of Labor.

We write this letter on behalf of these desperate residents.

These disheartened New Jerseyans are suffering, and they feel lost and abandoned. They have grown disenchanted with the system designed to protect them from temporary financial setbacks.

The phones at our district office ring constantly with furious, frightened and forlorn residents, some who have never been out of work before, and some who haven't seen money come in for weeks and months.

They need someone to talk to, someone to hear their pleas. They need to vent, and sometimes they just need to cry.

Our hard-working staffers try to answer questions and give them some help, but not even a Senator's staff can always get a response.

It is inexcusable for a NJDOL liaison, paid to serve as an intermediary between the department and elected legislators, to not provide us information.

As we previously requested, we implore your office to prioritize face-to-face assistance for applicants who need clarity and assistance.

Restaurants, gyms and retail stores have adapted their policies and procedures to serve customers in a safe, responsible manner. To remain viable, businesses are utilizing strategies they never would have considered a year ago.

The severity of the unemployment situation demands similar creativity from the Department of Labor. Find ways to get the job done like your business depended on it.

We cannot afford to “wait it out” until things return to normal. Follow the lead of Starbucks, grocery stores, and COVID testing centers, and adapt the process to better serve the public. For example, consider drive-up appointments where out-of-work residents can interact with subject area experts without leaving their cars.

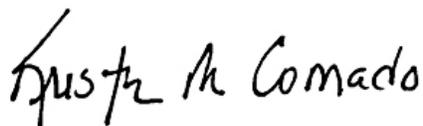
A year into this pandemic, the department’s computer system and staff should be functioning at a higher level, and the frustration experienced by residents should be at a minimum.

We read your recent comments in the press. You painted an optimistic picture, but it does not coincide with the reality.

There is still much work yet to be done, and that should start with hiring a responsive liaison that our legislative colleagues can depend on to answer our questions and assist our constituents.

We can help more of our fellow New Jerseyans when we work together with a common goal.

Sincerely,



Senator Kristin M. Corrado  
40th Legislative District



Senator Loretta Weinberg  
37th Legislative District