



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA  
Virginia Employment Commission

**Carrie Roth**  
Commissioner  
Advisor to the Governor for  
Strategic Initiatives

Post Office Box 26441  
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July 12, 2023

The Honorable Glenn Youngkin  
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia  
Patrick Henry Building  
1111 E. Broad Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable Kathy Byron  
Chairwoman, House Commerce and Energy  
Pocahontas Building  
900 E. Main Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable Richard Saslaw  
Chairman, Senate Commerce and Labor  
Senate of Virginia  
P.O. Box 396  
Richmond, Virginia 23218

The Honorable Adam Ebbin  
Chairman, Commission on Unemployment  
Compensation  
Senate of Virginia  
P.O. Box 396  
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Governor, Chairmen and Madame Chair:

Per the 2023-2024 Budget of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Virginia Employment Commission is required to provide a quarterly report on the plan to resolve outstanding adjudications with issues established in 2020 and 2021 and update on the Unemployment Compensation Ombudsman to the Governor, House Commerce and Energy Committee, the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee, and the Commission on Unemployment Compensation. This letter serves to meet that requirement.

**Resolving Outstanding Adjudications + All Issues on Claims from 2020/2021**

The VEC is tasked with developing a plan regarding the specific actions and timeline to resolve outstanding adjudications and issues established on claims from 2020 and 2021. The VEC has set its priorities and developed its strategic direction to transform the agency to be the "Best in Class" example of an employment security agency in the country.

As of today, in potential fraud and adjudication, there are no claims with issues established in 2020 or 2021.

The Unemployment Insurance Benefits team is focused on meeting and then exceeding the U.S. Department of Labor benefits timeliness and quality standards.

We have adjusted the work streams of the current adjudication staff as they have worked through the backlog to support other work streams such as appeals and potential fraud. There is not a need to hire additional staff to resolve claims.

### **Ombudsman (Chief Customer Advocate) Project**

The Chief Customer Advocate position was created in 2022 to support individuals and groups who are underserved or disadvantaged and address the availability of and access to UI programs and services. On April 26, 2023, Equia Barnette was named Chief Customer Advocate. Equia joined the agency during the pandemic as Customer Relations Supervisor after previously working at the U.S. Department of Commerce, General Dynamics IT and Genworth Financial.

The Customer Advisory Council (CAC) held their second meeting in April. The CAC consists of representatives from local and state organizations that advocate on behalf of underserved populations. The CAC provides guidance and feedback to the Chief Customer Advocate and team on the effectiveness of the VEC's outreach efforts and areas where those efforts could be improved.

The Chief Customer Advocate held a 3-day training in June with her team of 10 Customer Advocates who work in Virginia Career Works Centers throughout the Commonwealth: Wytheville; Richlands; Prince William County; Norfolk; Fishersville; Lynchburg; Martinsville; South Boston; Henrico/Cedar Fork communities; and Petersburg/Emporia/Prince George communities. This training focused on their community outreach in preparation for the initial round of local partner meetings the Customer Advocates held in June. In addition to their work with customers who have barriers to services, our local Customer Advocates are the referral point for members of the General Assembly within the region they serve. There are four remaining positions to fill.

The Chief Customer Advocate also provides educational information and assistance to persons seeking assistance in appeals and other matters related to unemployment compensation. In addition, the Chief Customer Advocate contributes as a key leader on our Plain Language Project team to ensure all efforts keep the customer as the focus and foundation of communications from the Virginia Employment Commission.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at [carrie.roth@vec.virginia.gov](mailto:carrie.roth@vec.virginia.gov) or 804.786.3001 with any questions.

Sincerely,



Carrie Roth