



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Virginia Employment Commission

Demetrios J. Melis
Commissioner

Post Office Box 26441
Richmond, VA 23261-6441

October 1, 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 was stated in the July 1, 2023, report, in potential fraud and adjudication, there are no claims with issues established in 2020 or 2021.

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. The position is supported by Customer Advocates who work in Virginia Career Works Centers throughout the Commonwealth.

Following training in June, the Customer Advocates completed an initial round of 11 partner meetings. Feedback from meeting participants who completed the surveys was overwhelmingly positive, with 96 percent of respondents reporting the presentation was helpful and informative. Suggestions for future topics will be used in upcoming partner meetings taking place in October and November.

To further increase program participation with employers, partners and stakeholders, Customer Advocates are attending community outreach events and meetings in their regions. Advocates have attended 22 events and meetings since August and continue to seek opportunities to introduce themselves in their communities and provide unemployment insurance education and assistance. Customer Advocates continue to serve as the referral point for members of the General Assembly within the regions they serve, in addition to their primary focus of working with customers who have barriers to services.

The Customer Advisory Council (CAC) held their third meeting in September. 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 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. In September, the Virginia Commonwealth University Performance Management (PMG), hosted focus groups for advocacy organizations to provide feedback on UI services. Unemployment Insurance customer feedback surveys were also launched by PMG to customers who applied for unemployment insurance in 2023 regarding their customer service experience.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at demetrios.melis@vec.virginia.gov or 804.786.3001 with any questions.

Sincerely,



Demetrios "Mitch" Melis