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August 21, 2020

Honorable Jim Cooper, Chair
Budget Subcommittee #4 on State Administration
State Capitol
Rm 6026

RE: Employment Development Department Strike Team

Dear Chair Cooper:

On July 29, 2020, Governor Newsom convened the Employment Development Department (EDD) Strike Team to develop an approach to transforming the experience unemployment insurance claimants in California have with EDD. The Governor's clear directive is to quickly and efficiently address process delays while also looking to long-term improvements. We are working quickly to provide a roadmap to success for EDD by September 12, 2020.

The EDD Strike Team is co-led by Jennifer Pahlka, co-founder of the United States Digital Response, the United States Digital Service, and the founder of Code for America and me. The Strike Team is focused on three areas:

- Policy – State and Federal: evaluation of policies that may be changed to alleviate time delays, barriers, process intensive procedures to sending payments to claimants.
- Process: review current step by step processes to identify opportunities to decrease process times.
- Technology: evaluate plans for future modernization of UI claims system to ensure most effective and efficient approaches are leveraged.

The EDD Strike Team is doing a comprehensive assessment to quickly and efficiently address process delays while also looking to long-term improvements. The Team is also reviewing the list of recommendations provided in the letter signed by 61 members of the Legislature. The goal is to recommend immediate changes to improve service at EDD while also making short-, mid- and long-term recommendations to improve the claimant experience and UI operations at the Department.

The final report to the Governor is expected to offer specific actions within EDD's operations, call centers and technology systems to begin clearing the backlog. Longer-term recommendations will be made to the way the Department's technology system is designed so that it serves claimants, employees and Department leadership more efficiently and effectively.

There will be no silver bullets and no simple fixes to erase the backlog, but the EDD Strike Team believes the assessment will shed much needed light on EDD's difficulties and make specific recommendations to the Governor, so that immediate improvements can occur. We are also committed to helping EDD communicate more clearly about the status of their work to the claimants, public at large, Legislature, and the Governor.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Yolanda Richardson".

Yolanda Richardson, Secretary
Government Operations Agency