

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-2202

May 31, 2020

The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer  
Governor of Michigan  
P.O. Box 30013  
Lansing, MI 48909

Governor Whitmer:

Since passage of the CARES Act, I have received over 1100 direct inquiries to my office from distressed constituents attempting to access their earned unemployment benefits. I have heard directly from parents calling upward of 100 times a day, days on end, trying to get through to the Michigan unemployment system, so they can make sure there is food on the table for their children.

Just this week, I received a message from a constituent in Muskegon who stated, "This e-mail is in desperation. I was laid off on March 27th, 2020. I have attempted to receive my unemployment benefits since I filed on March 30th, 2020. They have all the information they need. I have sent numerous messages asking for the status of my claim with no response. Now I get a blank blue screen and nothing else. I can't re-file. I have bills that are overdue and can't pay. I have no idea what to do or where to go. Please help me. My family depends on me."

Given this context you can imagine my dismay to learn that over 31,000 state employees were automatically enrolled in the state unemployment system, while many of your constituents are still waiting for assistance. While you have certainly found time to appear on national television programs, Michiganders still can't properly access the unemployment system - the very system you utilized to prioritize state bureaucrats over families across West Michigan. This is unacceptable.

Equally as troubling, I am told by my state legislature colleagues your one day a week furlough of state employees allows them to collect a pro-rated unemployment check as well as granting them access to additional federal compensation. Don't you find it troubling that state employees are providing fewer services for taxpayers yet making more than they would be if there were working five days a week? Your administration's desire to game the system in favor of state employees is not only wrong, it erodes people's faith in government.

Instead of having your administration steer taxpayer funded contracts to partisan political operatives and creating sweetheart deals for state employees, shouldn't the focus be on making sure the needs of Michigan residents are met?

My constituents are jobless and unable to get answers from an unemployment office that has been inconsistent at best and unresponsive at worst. Michiganders shouldn't have to wait months to receive a check they are forced to file for because of your executive orders.

To that end could you please provide the answers to the following questions:

*How many hours and how many employees did it take to automatically enroll state employees?*

*Were any resources that would have been used to enroll everyday Michiganders in the unemployment system used to get these state workers enrolled?*

*How many of these 31,000 employees will be receiving more money than their normal paychecks from this budget scheme?*

*How many Michiganders are still waiting to receive unemployment benefits related to Covid-19?*

With the unemployment rate in Michigan now over 20%, and hundreds of thousands of Michiganders looking for unemployment assistance, state employees should not receive preferential treatment from your administration. I look forward to your prompt response to these questions as I examine the State of Michigan's need for additional federal resources provided by the hardworking taxpayers of Michigan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Huizenga". The signature is stylized and cursive, with the first name "Bill" being more prominent and the last name "Huizenga" following in a similar script.

Bill Huizenga  
Member of Congress