

June 17, 2020

Via Electronic Transmission

The Honorable Scott S. Dahl
Inspector General
United States Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Mr. Dahl,

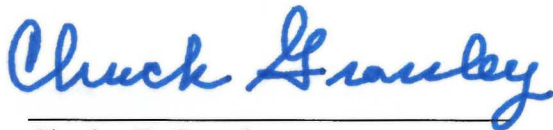
A recent letter to you from Senators Schumer and Wyden requested that you investigate Florida's delivery of unemployment benefits and temporary expanded benefits provided in the CARES Act. I support a review of how state systems have performed in this unprecedented time. However, I am concerned that a focus solely on one state's experience will limit the usefulness of the investigation and could be perceived to be politically motivated. Many states have faced similar problems, so I request that you expand any investigation to include other states that faced systems and benefit delivery challenges so Congress can have the information needed to inform future policymaking efforts. This would obviously require that the results from your investigation of states be released at the same time, rather than in a piecemeal fashion.

As the public health crisis began impacting the economy, every state faced unprecedented challenges in handling an unprecedented surge of claims filed for unemployment insurance benefits. News articles in almost every state have highlighted the strain placed on state unemployment systems. The letter that you received from Senators Schumer and Wyden highlights that only 28 percent of claims in Florida had been processed as of the date of the letter. Yet I am concerned that this request is to only review problems in one system, when others have clearly failed the unemployed as well. For example, recent [news articles](#) have highlighted how Puerto Rico's online application has been riddled with problems, with only 3 percent of applications filed having being processed three weeks after its launch. Media reports have [noted](#) that unemployment system reforms begun in Oregon in 2009 won't be completed until 2025—16 years after they started, despite federal funding intended for technology modernization reportedly having been received in 2009. Reporters in New Jersey [discovered](#) the state was relying on 40-year-old mainframe computers running software developed in the 1950s. Challenges in some states have been serious enough that agency leaders have either resigned or been replaced, including in states like Hawaii, Kentucky, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Oregon.

I agree with Senators Schumer and Wyden that we should ensure that states are prepared and able to meet the needs of their citizens during this crisis, as well as in more ordinary times. However, I believe an investigation focused solely on Florida will miss key information from other states, as this appears to be a systemic issue that needs to be addressed more broadly than looking into one state. Gathering information from more than one state will help provide a better picture of systematic issues that should be addressed by Congress, and I believe such a review of state systems more broadly will provide the information we need to make improvements to systems across the country.

Thank you for your continued work to oversee the implementation of the unemployment provisions in the CARES Act, and I hope you will take my views into account as you review state performance during this difficult time.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance