



Legislation Text

File #: Res 1381-2020, **Version:** *

Res. No. 1381

Resolution calling on the New York State Department of Labor to implement a new emergency response plan to modernize its capabilities to better prepare for economic disasters.

By Council Member Rivera

Whereas, In 2020, The Wall Street Journal reported that New York's unemployment rate had reached its highest levels since the Great Depression, catalyzed by the spread of the new coronavirus, COVID-19; and

Whereas, According to the New York State Department of Labor (DOL), the rise of unemployment applications has grown 1,000 percent, overwhelming the DOL and its ability to deal with the current economic disaster; and

Whereas, According to The New York Times, over 1.2 million New Yorkers seeking relief have contacted the DOL, only to experience busy signals, disconnections, and error-prone online applications; and

Whereas, The DOL's process for administering unemployment benefits is outdated, as the current system is not built for a new class of workers, such as independent contractors and the self-employed, who are eligible for assistance during the COVID-19 outbreak; and

Whereas, Delays have caused New Yorkers to struggle for food and basic necessities, causing desperation among those who have not received unemployment assistance, according to the Democrat & Chronicle news outlet; and

Whereas, On April 1, 2020, New York Governor Andrew M. Cuomo apologized to despairing New Yorkers who have repeatedly been unable to secure unemployment insurance on the DOL's website which has continually been crashing; and

Whereas, On April 9, 2020, the DOL issued a press release announcing its partnership with technology company Google and service provider Verizon to help restore its operations; and

Whereas, Given the recent attempt to create a more reliable online system for New Yorkers, the Pew Research Center found that 71 percent of Americans who filed for unemployment in March still hadn't received benefits by late April; and

Whereas, The DOL was aware that its unemployment insurance system has needed an upgrade for years, as demonstrated by a 2017 Request for Proposals for a "system solution" to completely revamp the underlying system which allows New Yorkers to receive benefits; and

Whereas, Several New York Senators have expressed concern with the DOL's backlogging failures by highlighting the immediate need to improve the technological capabilities of the DOL and ensure that a long-term solution is put in place to further protect New Yorkers from economic disasters; and

Whereas, Unemployment benefits are often the last line of defense for those struggling with economic shortfalls, and their livelihoods depend on the DOL's ability to administer services efficiently and promptly, which requires an urgent strategy that updates technology and streamlines operations; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the New York State Department of Labor to implement a new emergency response plan to modernize its capabilities to better prepare for economic disasters.

LS #14652
06/03/2020
AH