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February 8, 2022

Economic Matters Committee Hearing

Re: HB04 Unemployment Insurance – Recovery of Benefits – Refund of Payments

Sponsor: Delegate Courtney Watson

Position: Favorable

Thank you Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby and members of the Committee.

I am grateful to Delegate Watson for introducing HB4. I am providing a timeline of events to illustrate that it took me one year to receive a refund of \$3440 from the Labor Dept. on an overpayment.

1. I received Notice of an overpayment in November 2020. I repaid this using the BEACON program immediately. They posted a receipt.
2. In January 2021 I received a 2nd overpayment notice for the same weeks. Unemployment took a 2nd repayment from my weekly checks. For 8 months I called, mailed, emailed, and re-sent documents from my bank, a screenshot showing the payment in BEACON along with a copy of my 1099G that shows the repayment. There was no reply.
3. August 20, 2021, I contacted Delegate Courtney Watson, for assistance. Her Chief of Staff Terry said that she would follow up with Maryland Dept. of Labor to help. She did.
4. On August 31, 2021, I received an email from Alivia at Unemployment as my “case manager”. She emailed me later the same day that she had concluded that the two overpayment notices “weren’t duplicates I responded to explain that it was a duplicate. I paid the overpayment I owed. She responded to my message with another email that said “I understand you’re requesting a refund of \$3440. All overpayment issues are handled by our benefits overpayment control system – I can’t assist you with receiving a refund and I am closing your case.” She provided me with unemployment’s general website and a phone number that just looped to nothing.
5. In September 2021, I spoke several times about my situation with a person named Jodi from unemployment. Jodi said at one point that they did not have proof that I had paid the \$3440 overpayment, and that the IT department could not find any of the records I had sent. I re-sent the relevant documents directly to her via email.

6. I had not heard from Jodi for 3 weeks, so I contacted Delegate Watson's office again. Delegate Watson's Chief of Staff indicated that she would follow up with them again. I also continued to email Jodi directly. On October 12, 2021, I received an email from Jodi which said "The \$3440 refund was approved on 9-28-21. Unfortunately, I am not able to provide you with a timeline as to when the check will be issued; the checks are not issued from this office. I will monitor your account and let you know as soon as the check has been processed." She explained that all payments are "backlogged" and I need to continue to wait. I was notified in the email that they changed banks and that was the excuse.

7. I finally received the payment owed to me via check the check was dated November 10, 2021. It was one week before the one-year date when this debacle started.

Thanks to the intervention of Delegate Watson and her Chief of Staff Terry my issue was resolved. Others are not so lucky even to this date. This bill will help with overpayments and corrective action to be taken more seriously. I urge a Favorable report on this bill. Thank you.