

Eddie Sleeper

From: staubhome@charter.net
Sent: Wednesday, January 12, 2022 12:11 PM
To: Rep. Steven Johnson (District 72); Rep. Pat Outman (District 70); Rep. Julie Brixie (District 69); Rep. Michele Hoytenga (District 102); Rep. John Reilly (District 46); Rep. Jeff Yaroch (District 33); Rep. Jack O'Malley (District 101); Rep. David LaGrand (District 75); Rep. Stephanie Young (District 8); Eddie Sleeper
Subject: UIA Harasses and Falsely Accuses Vulnerable Citizens of Misrepresentation

Dear Oversight Committee:

This email is being sent seeking clarification and resolution over recent confusing and frustrating actions taken by the UIA regarding Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA).

My daughter, Margaret Staub, like so many other Michiganders, found herself in a very unfamiliar situation at the beginning of 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic forced businesses and schools to shut down nationwide. Maggie was a full time college student working part time at the university she attends, when very suddenly everything had shut down as a direct result of COVID-19.

Through the information provided on UIA Fact Sheet 172 that was distributed through the State of Michigan's Unemployment Insurance Agency (UIA) sources, and inquiries directly to the UIA, Maggie signed up for PUA, **was approved for benefits**, and began to receive PUA and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (PUC).

Now, after over 18 months since her initial filing and her claim being closed since September 2021, at the beginning of December 2021, she received 17 letters in the mail stating that her claim has been reconsidered and the prior determination has been modified. The letters state that she did not have income in 2019 or 2020 prior to the pandemic and did not become unemployed as a direct result of COVID-19 (**despite having provided this verification several times in the prior 18 months**). The letters also accuse her of misrepresentation in filing her initial claim and say she must pay back all of the PUA and PUC benefits received throughout 2020 and 2021. Maggie has submitted a protest through her online account and has also sent the UIA several messages asking for information. Messages are unanswered and her protest is pending.

Unfortunately, this harassment situation by the UIA is not unique. As Maggie discussed this with her boss at work, she was told that the university was getting many inquiries from students who had gotten similar letters and they were hearing similar stories of other students across the state. As the UIA is subjected to increased scrutiny over fraudulently paid unemployment benefits, I fear they are targeting citizens with retroactive, punitive measures who were in similar situations as Maggie, full time students working part time jobs that qualified for PUA and were approved for assistance through the UIA supplied guidelines, instead of targeting those who falsely filed claims through illegal means and stolen identities.

The mental stress of the pandemic, experiencing uncertainty with school and employment, and now being falsely accused of misrepresentation and looming debt, have all been adding up and taking their toll on my daughter. I am concerned that her vulnerability as an inexperienced young adult, coupled with a disability, has put her, and other Michiganders like her, in a position that is impossible to navigate.

Resolution of these unfounded accusations of misrepresentation and harassment from UIA, for Maggie and all other Michiganders, would be greatly appreciated. Please contact me if further information is needed.

Thank you,
Karen Staub