

Dept. of Workforce Development: Transition Director Pechacek releases statement in response to Legislative Audit Bureau report

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Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Transition Director Amy Pechacek released the following statement in response to the Legislative Audit Bureau's report on Unemployment Insurance Call Centers:

"DWD continues to work to overcome the unique challenges presented throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and is committed to continuous improvement to better serve Wisconsin residents. We appreciate the Legislative Audit Bureau's review and recommendations provided through this audit, which will improve the transparency and oversight of UI operations both during and after this public health emergency.

To date, the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Division has processed over 6 million claims and has paid out over \$3.7 billion in unemployment benefits over the past six months. These benefits have helped our neighbors navigate extraordinarily difficult times and have helped stabilize entire communities across the state.

UI received an unprecedented number of calls into its UI help center throughout the spring and early summer, receiving nearly 5.8 million calls in one week. Many Wisconsinites impacted by COVID-19 had never before applied for unemployment insurance so understandably had many questions about the program and the application process, as well as about the new programs and changes passed by the federal and state governments. DWD's antiquated IT system hamstrung DWD's ability to quickly implement new changes and programs, which prompted even more calls and questions into the UI help center.

By significantly increasing its telephone system capacity, help center hours, and staff, UI has been able to markedly improve its customer service to UI claimants and accept nearly all calls into the UI help center since late July.”