

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1904

June 30, 2020

Mr. Larry D. Turner  
Acting Inspector General  
United States Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Acting Inspector General Turner:

I am writing to request information on efforts to stem the large-scale unemployment insurance fraud targeting unemployment insurance systems in Maine and across the country. I commend the ongoing work of the Department of Labor Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and other federal and state agencies to stop the ruthless criminals behind this scam. These criminals are stealing taxpayer dollars from relief efforts, and I am deeply concerned about the effect of their activities on Americans waiting to receive much-needed unemployment relief and on states' already overburdened unemployment systems.

The Senate Special Committee on Aging, which I lead, has a long history of exposing and fighting financial fraud. In the past seven years, we have held 25 hearings focused on financial fraud and scams. We have learned that these criminals will relentlessly exploit an emergency for their own financial gain. The recent increase in unemployment insurance fraud is no different. This scam involves criminals taking advantage of pandemic unemployment assistance programs by using stolen personal information to file fraudulent claims with state unemployment systems.

The criminals perpetrating this fraud are exploiting a crisis to steal from both state governments and the federal government. Doing so has placed delays on receipt of unemployment benefits for those most in need. In response to this fraud, state departments of labor are rightfully putting on hold suspected fraudulent claims. Yet, this also leads to further delays for those who filed legitimate claims. In addition, unemployed individuals may find themselves unable to access much-needed assistance if the scammers have already submitted a fraudulent claim in their name.

To better understand the steps the OIG is taking to raise awareness of this scam and the actions needed to reduce the likelihood of future fraud attempts, please provide answers to the following questions no later than July 17, 2020:

1. What information, if any, is the OIG able to highlight about these frauds that would be helpful to share with the people of Maine?
2. Other than online fraud alerts, what steps has the OIG taken to raise awareness of this scam among businesses and workers, particularly in rural areas?

3. When the OIG encounters individuals whose stolen information was used to file fraudulent claims, what steps, if any, does the OIG take to help these individuals safeguard their identities going forward?
4. Has the OIG encountered any legislative barriers or resource constraints in its efforts to raise public awareness and disrupt scammers' attempts to continue perpetrating this unemployment fraud? If so, what additional legislative authority and/or resources are needed to address these barriers?
5. What actions can state unemployment systems take to reduce the likelihood of being targeted by a future unemployment insurance scam? What additional authority or resources, if any, are needed to make these changes?

If you have any questions about this request, please do not hesitate to contact me or have your staff contact [REDACTED] Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



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Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator