

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 2, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

President Biden:

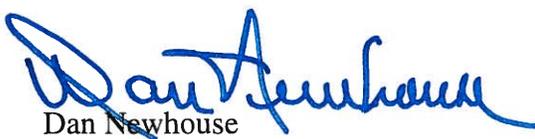
We write to express concern over the appointment of Suzi Levine to Interim Assistant Secretary of the Employment and Training Administration within the U.S. Department of Labor. Ms. Levine's dismal track record at the helm of the Washington State Employment Security Department (ESD) and gross mismanagement of state taxpayer dollars is extremely concerning considering this new position puts her in charge of over \$9 billion of taxpayer funds.

In March 2020, millions of Washingtonians lost their jobs as a result of state-wide shutdowns implemented in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic. During this critical time, under Ms. Levine's leadership, ESD's unemployment claim process underwent numerous updates, which eliminated safeguards to verify to whom dollars were being distributed. A report released by Washington State Auditor Pat McCarthy specifically faults ESD for failing to take action to fix software weaknesses that led to the theft of over \$600 million of taxpayer money to a Nigerian fraud scheme. These funds, of which only half were recovered, were specifically intended to assist families and individuals in Washington state affected by the unprecedented pandemic.

However, her mistakes that led to the largest fraud in Washington state history were matched by the poor service that defined her tenure. Over the past year, our offices have heard from thousands of Washingtonians who had trouble accessing ESD's services while attempting to file a claim. ESD failed to provide response, timely service, and – in some cases – thousands of dollars to our constituents for multiple weeks or months. In response to inquiries from the Washington congressional delegation regarding our constituents' lack of access to ESD online or by phone, Ms. Levine advised us on a June 8th conference call that we would have to limit the number of "cases for escalation" – i.e. our constituents with the most need – to five individuals per congressional office.

With thousands of our constituents affected by the ineffectiveness of Ms. Levine's leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, we are deeply concerned that her appointment will have a negative impact on the millions of people who rely on the services of the Employment and Training Administration. We urge you to reconsider this appointment.

Sincerely,


Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress


Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress


Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress