

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Virginia Employment Commission Responds to Lawsuit About Delays in Unemployment Payments with...a Request to Delay.

Despite having been fully informed about the issues detailed in the lawsuit more than six months ago, the VEC moves to put the case on hold for an extra month.

Richmond VA – Yesterday, the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) filed a motion to postpone their response to being served with a class-action lawsuit brought on behalf of the hundreds of Virginians suffering severe hardships while waiting for the VEC to approve their unemployment insurance claims.

Despite knowing about these issues for months, and despite failing at meeting required benchmarks for resolving issues with claims for well over a year, VEC Commissioner Ellen Marie Hess asked the court to allow them to delay their official response to the class-action lawsuit—filed almost three weeks ago—until May 28.

The Legal Aid Justice Center, Legal Aid Works, the Virginia Poverty Law Center, Consumer Litigation Associates, PC, and Kelly Guzzo, PLC, submitted an opposition to this motion soon after on behalf of the named plaintiff in the lawsuit.

“None of this is news to the Commonwealth, as Plaintiffs, their counsel, political leaders, the media and endless numbers of affected Virginians have been contacting the VEC for well over six month” wrote the legal team representing those harmed by the VEC in their opposition to the motion to delay, *“And yet, in defense of a lawsuit premised on the allegation that the VEC cannot timely respond to Virginians seeking federal insured unemployment, the VEC suggests that it also cannot timely respond to them here.”*

“The issues cited by the VEC in their motion simply do not reflect reality,” said Pat Levy- Lavelle, an attorney with the Legal Aid Justice Center said, *“We hope Judge Hudson quickly denies this request and moves us one step closer to relief for Virginians suffering due to inaction by the VEC.”*

“Under normal circumstances, I would routinely agree to grant opposing counsel the courtesy of some extra time to file an answer, but the workers waiting months for benefits know these are not normal circumstances, and no one has given them “extra time” to pay their rent or utility or food bills,” said Ann H. Kloeckner, Esq, Executive Director of Legal Aid Works.

Since the filing of the proposed class action lawsuit, legal aid organizations across the state have been inundated with requests for help from Virginians desperate to receive unemployment insurance funds—needed emergency aid—that has been too long held up by an inaccessible system.

For more information on the proposed class action lawsuit along with stories from those affected, visit www.justice4all.org/ui

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The [Legal Aid Justice Center \(LAJC\)](#) partners with communities and clients to achieve justice by dismantling systems that create and perpetuate poverty. By justice, we mean racial, social, and economic justice.

The [Virginia Poverty Law Center \(VPLC\)](#) is the state support center for all civil legal aid programs in Virginia. VPLC's work breaks down systemic barriers that keep low-income Virginians in the cycle of poverty through advocacy, education, and litigation.

[Legal Aid Works \(LAW\)](#) champions fairness by advocating for those with the least access to the civil justice system.