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ODJFS Responds to Auditor of State Report on Unemployment Insurance

COLUMBUS, OHIO – Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Director Matt Damschroder today released the following statement following the Auditor of State’s release of the pandemic response performance audit commissioned by [House Bill 614](#).

“I would like to thank State Auditor Keith Faber and his audit team for their efforts. The audit team was professional, detailed, and quickly learned the complex world of unemployment. Their work has provided us with useful recommendations to affect long-term changes to improve our system and prepare us for unforeseen future challenges.

“As indicated in the audit, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Ohio’s unemployment system was unprecedented. Ohio’s unemployment rate increased from 4.7% in February 2020 to a peak of 17.4% in April 2020. The number of initial unemployment applications received per week increased from 7,000 to 275,000 in only two weeks. At the same time, the federal government created four entirely new unemployment programs that had to be programmed and implemented. An antiquated claims-processing system, which was already slated for replacement, and historically low staffing levels due to low prior demand left us unprepared.

“I’m proud of the hard work, ingenuity, and adaptability of ODJFS employees, contractors, and private-sector partners, who have spent the last 18 months working through historic numbers of claims while fighting historic amounts of fraud. Since the start of the pandemic, nearly 6.6 million initial applications have been filed for both traditional unemployment benefits and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance. As a result, we have distributed \$23.8 billion in benefits to more than 2.4 million claimants.

“Much work remains, but we are confident in the improvements we have already made and look forward to utilizing the learnings in the audit to inform the future work being planned.”

A copy of the ODJFS response to the audit can be found [here](#).

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The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services manages vital programs that strengthen Ohio families. These include job training and employment services, unemployment insurance, cash and food assistance, child care, child and adult protective services, adoption, and child support services.

