

ELAINE LURIA
2ND DISTRICT, VIRGINIA

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4602

May 25, 2021

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND MARITIME SECURITY

The Honorable Ralph Northam
Governor of Virginia
PO Box 1475
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Governor Northam,

The Hampton Roads hospitality industry is an economic engine for our region and a crucial driver for the Commonwealth's tourism economy. I have repeatedly heard from small business owners that they are unable to fill vacant positions. Some have even shared they had to close their doors during the week, not due to a lack of business, but a lack of staff.

While I appreciate that your administration recently devoted \$20 million to process outstanding unemployment claims for struggling individuals, we also need to more effectively enforce existing regulations around unemployment because expediting adjudication will not fully address the concerns of our small businesses. Current law dictates that a person is ineligible for unemployment benefits if they turn down a reasonable job offer. As we move into the summer season, we must help those who need it while ensuring that no one passes up an opportunity to take a job.

To address staff shortages in the Commonwealth's hospitality industry, I ask you to use American Rescue Plan Act funds to bolster enforcement of unemployment insurance claims to the Virginia Employment Commission. Treasury guidance stated that state and local funding may be used to "build their internal capacity to successfully implement economic relief programs, with investments in data analysis, targeted outreach, technology infrastructure, and impact evaluations." These funds would allow the Virginia Employment Commission to prioritize delivering unemployment benefits to those who are in serious need and to determine which cases are fraudulent.

As the COVID-19 vaccines make it safe to return to life as we knew it, getting people back to work is an important step toward sustainable economic recovery. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



Elaine G. Luria
Member of Congress