

TESTIMONY OF DAWN DEANE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES
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Chairman Davis, Ranking Member Doggett and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to be here today. My name is Dawn Deane, and I am a resident of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Like so many others these days, I am unemployed through no fault of my own and supporting myself and my nine-year-old daughter on unemployment insurance. I lost my job in June of this year, and in spite of a strong professional background, I have yet to have even one potential employer show any interest in interviewing me for a new job.

Too often these days, unemployed Americans like me are reduced to either statistics or stereotypes. We don't have names and faces – we're either one of 14 million who are out of work, or we're lazy people, happy to sit home collecting unemployment rather than actively looking for jobs. But I am not just a statistic and I am not lazy.

I am a 49 year old single mother of two. My son is 23 years old and he recently graduated from the University of Pittsburg and is fully employed and living on his own. My daughter lives with me and while I receive child support from her father, my salary was our primary source of financial support. For the past twenty years, I have worked in the field of human resources and I have a proud history of longevity on the job, holding my three previous jobs for seven, eight and three-and-a-half years. And in spite of all my hard work, right now, I am unemployed. Thankfully, I am able to receive unemployment insurance benefits which are what is sustaining me and my daughter while I diligently look for new work.

As a human resources professional, I am very aware of how to diligently and strategically search for a new job, and I am doing just that. Unfortunately, my professional background also makes me aware of how bad it is out there for the unemployed. Like tens of millions of other Americans, each day, I engage in a thorough and multi-faceted search for new employment, and have been doing so since I lost my job in June. It is very tough, but I am confident in my abilities and confident that my job-search efforts will eventually be successful.

I have registered my resume with all of the major websites like Career Builder, Monster, Indeed, and SHRM. Through those sites and other job announcements I have applied for approximately 40 jobs so far. In addition, I have attended four different career fairs since being laid-off, and through them, have applied for about 50 additional jobs. I have yet to hear from a single employer from any of those applications. I also understand the importance of networking, so I have reached out to all my friends and former colleagues asking for their assistance in finding a new job. I've gone to my local One-Stop Career Center to look for open jobs, and have visited and/or contacted the offices of my city council and state representatives to see if they have any resources for their constituents who are searching for jobs. I am not only applying for jobs in my field, but am looking more widely for all sorts of administrative jobs because I want to work and support my daughter and myself.

Because I know that I'm not the only one in this situation, and because I have skills to offer others who are struggling with unemployment, I also volunteer at a local community center and church helping others with their job-searches. Finally, I am auditing a course at Villanova University that will prepare me to take an exam to receive a Professional Human Resources Certification, hopefully enhancing my value on the job market. As you can see, I am certainly not lazy and am using this time to both better myself and try to help others who are in the same situation, all the while diligently looking for a new job and taking care of my daughter.

But, as I said, so far the job search has been difficult. The job market is weak, which of course means the Human Resources field is especially weak. And while I am looking for jobs in other fields, as you all know, the best chance of success in the job market is usually in the field in which you have done most of your

work, so although I am willing to work in a broad array of jobs, the odds of me getting them are small. But I keep applying anyway.

Right now, I thank God for unemployment insurance, because it is allowing me to keep up with my mortgage and provide the bare necessities of food and transportation. I lived well within my means when I was working, but even our modest life-style is a challenge now. I could not afford to keep up health insurance so right now, my daughter and I have no coverage, which is very frightening. I am working with a housing counselor to see if I can restructure my mortgage and lower the monthly payments. I have always wanted to become a home owner and own my little piece of America and 10 years ago, I purchased a home that was well within my means. If I can't maintain my mortgage I will not have any other way of saving my home since the Homeowner programs such as HEMAP have been cut as well. I have applied for a subsidy to pay my monthly gas and electric bills, have had to stop my daughter's extra-curricular activities like a dance class she loved, and was not able to buy many back-to-school supplies or clothes for her. When I lost my job, I originally cancelled our cable and internet service in the home but I soon realized that I needed internet to really search for jobs effectively so I've re-established bare-bones service, but I am looking for other ways to continue to scale back on our expenses even though I've already eliminated everything that isn't strictly necessary already.

Until I find new work, unemployment insurance is our necessary source of income. My state benefits began in June and will end in December, and while I hope that I have a new job before the end of the year, the absolute lack of any success I've had so far really worries me. Thus, while I don't want to have to receive federal unemployment insurance, with the unemployment rate so high right now, I just don't see how Congress can even think about letting these important federal programs expire. If they do, my daughter and I, and millions of other families like us, might have no safety net—no lifeline in the new year.

Quite simply, reauthorizing these important federal unemployment insurance programs is simply the single most important thing for this Congress to do right now, along with making some real efforts to create good jobs for the millions like me who just want to work. Thank you for your time today.