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# UNION UPDATE



Margarita Maldonado (right), Vice President of Bargaining, testifies at EDD hearing

## Legislators investigate EDD system failures

### Unemployment checks delayed; Local 1000 raised early warnings

The Assembly Insurance Committee is investigating the troubled rollout of a new computer system at the Employment Development Department (EDD) that caused as many as 200,000 unemployed California workers to go without much-needed benefits.

At a Nov. 6 hearing, our members testified about a myriad of problems with the new system, many of which were identified by Local 1000 well before the new system's launch. Those problems created a huge backlog of claims and stripped benefits from many existing claimants for no apparent reason.

"This has been an enormous tragedy, and it could have been prevented if EDD management had consulted with the front-line workers who actually process these claims and interact every day with unemployed Californians," testified Margarita Maldonado, Local 1000 vice president for bargaining.

"We started having conversations with EDD management three years ago. During that time period, we started raising red flags," Maldonado said. "EDD failed

to listen to the people on the front lines – our members – to ensure this transition would be sustainable, not only with the work they're doing but also with the constituencies that would be accessing the system."

Employment program representatives Carmen Ledesma and Irene Livingston (both Local 1000 stewards) told the committee about unacceptable backlogs of calls and emails, as well as the hardships experienced by unemployed Californians and their families. In many cases, callers have gone weeks without an income or answers to their questions.

Assemblymember Lorena Gonzalez (D-San Diego) pressed EDD management to explain why workers were not consulted.

"It is clear that the on-the-line workers themselves were identifying problems much sooner than that," Gonzalez said. "And, I'm wondering what it is about the EDD culture that the on-the-line staff's concerns were not listened to or dealt with."

## A commitment to help Californians in need

### Members speak out, speak up for unemployed Californians who rely on flawed EDD systems

While the state's new computer system at Employment Development Department (EDD) has failed thousands of unemployed workers, front-line Local 1000 members are fighting to fix the problems and once again make EDD a safety net Californians can rely on.

The 7,000 Local 1000 members at EDD serve their communities and put Local 1000's purpose statement

into action through their work. These members are on the front lines every day, helping thousands of unemployed Californians receive the benefits they have earned.



EDD steward Irene Livingston helping thousands of unemployed Californians receive the benefits they have earned.

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## Resource Center

Monday-Friday  
7 a.m. to 7 p.m.  
866.471.SEIU (7348)

## Website

[seiu1000.org](http://seiu1000.org)

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**“Some people say they have called EDD over 200 times to get help, and have yet to get through.”**

–Irene Livingston (left)  
EDD steward from San Jose



**“I helped a man who said he hadn’t eaten for days and had no access to a shower – all because of the EDD computer system failures.”**

–Carmen Ledesma (right)  
EDD steward from Sacramento

## EDD members help Californians in need

(STORY CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

But their commitment to bringing social and economic justice to some of California’s most vulnerable communities doesn’t stop there. When problems with the rollout of a new computer system began to interfere with the services their neighbors rely on, frontline EDD workers took action through their union.

In recent months, many EDD stewards and countless members have stepped up efforts to tackle the technical problems plaguing their department and improve the services they provide to unemployed and disabled Californians.

Two of these EDD stewards, Irene Livingston and Carmen Ledesma, gave firsthand accounts of EDD’s problems caused by the new system at an Assembly committee hearing in the Capitol on Nov. 6.

“Some people say they have called EDD over 200 times to get help and have yet to get through,” said Livingston, of San Jose. She added that the email system used by claimants has amassed hundreds of thousands of unprocessed messages.

“Simple tasks that once were completed through

one or two actions now take up to four or more additional actions,” Livingston added.

Ledesma added powerful testimony about the human impact of EDD’s technical glitches: “I helped a man who said he hadn’t eaten for days and had no access to a shower – all because of the EDD computer system failures.

“When I advised him that five payments had just been authorized, the phone went silent. For a second, I thought he’d hung up, but then I heard him sobbing with relief over the phone,” said Ledesma, of Sacramento. “He thanked me repeatedly and said he was going to go find himself a decent meal. I could not hold back my own tears.”

“As we work with the Legislature, EDD management and our allies to fix these very serious problems, our members are putting their values into action,” said Local 1000 President Yvonne R. Walker. “The work we do at EDD – helping our neighbors in a time of great need – is at the core of our purpose statement. It’s been inspiring to see members step up in a time of crisis to deliver on our commitment to economic justice and helping all Californians live in sustainable communities.”

### Member Resource Center

## Frequently Asked Questions



**How many hours do I need to work to qualify for FMLA, the Family and Medical Leave Act?**

You need to have worked 1,250 hours in the previous 12 months. You can find details about FMLA in Article 8.16 of our contract.

**I didn’t receive my check on payday. What are my rights?**

If you are a permanent full-time employee and didn’t receive a check on payday, the state must issue you a salary advance, consistent with departmental policy and under the conditions outlined in contract Article 11.4, Timely Payment of Wages.

If you’d like more information on these questions or any provisions of our contract, go to [seiu1000.org](http://seiu1000.org) or call our Member Resource Center between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., Monday through Friday, at 866.471.SEIU (7348).