

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **DES Announces Over \$5.7 Billion In Unemployment Insurance and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance**

**PHOENIX – (July 9, 2020)** The Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) announced today it has distributed more than \$5.7 billion in state unemployment insurance (UI) and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) since the week ending March 7, 2020. During that period, nearly 323,000 Arizonans received UI benefits and 557,000 Arizonans received PUA benefits. More than \$722 million was issued to claimants last week alone. Detailed information for each week can be found on the [Unemployment Insurance Data Dashboard](#).

“This staggering figure represents hundreds of thousands of Arizonans receiving critical assistance during this time of need,” said DES Director Michael Wisehart. “However, there is more work to be done. Our teams continue to work around the clock to improve our processes and systems so that we can continue to meet the needs of unemployed Arizonans.”

DES has increased staff within the Unemployment Insurance Unit to over 750, and we will continue to increase our capacity to answer calls, process claims and investigate reports of potential fraud. An additional 100 staff will be added to our private call center vendor to further meet the ongoing demand for assistance.

As fraudulent activity targeting the UI benefit system infiltrates state systems across the nation, the Department continues to strengthen its fraud detection and prevention for the UI benefit. The DES Inspector General (OIG) is working closely with the Arizona Attorney General’s Office, the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Secret Service and other law enforcement entities to share information and resources available to prevent and detect fraud.

OIG and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Integrity Unit continuously vet methods and tools for the detection and prevention of fraud in association with identity theft. DES has more than doubled its staff dedicated to program integrity, and continues to add staff to meet the increase in fraudulent activity. The Department has made significant progress in identifying case types and patterns indicative of fraud, and will continue to release payments to claims filed by eligible unemployed Arizonans in need of this critical assistance.

As a result of these assessments, tens of thousands of PUA claims have been identified as potential fraud. The Department will continue to balance the need to serve our communities with program integrity. As those who seek to compromise our systems attempt to breach our security protocols, we will continue to adapt and work through these obstacles to further assist Arizonans in need.

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