



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DES Expands ID.me Identity Verification for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Claimants *Prevents Fraudulent Filings, Reduces Weekly Initial Claims by Nearly 99%*

PHOENIX – (November 19, 2020) Beginning December 5, 2020, the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) will improve access to benefits for eligible unemployment claimants and further strengthen its fraud prevention measures by requiring all Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) claimants to verify their identities using ID.me, a safe and secure identification portal, before they will be eligible to receive or continue to receive benefits. By implementing this next phase of the enhanced identity verification program, DES can quickly identify the eligible claimants among the millions of fraudulent claims filed.

On October 12, 2020, DES announced the launch of its [initial partnership](#) with ID.me, which required new PUA claimants to verify their identities using the secure service upon filing their initial claim. Since the launch, more than 11,000 Arizona users have successfully verified their identities and over 4,700 instances of unemployment insurance fraud have been blocked. This includes approximately 43,000 Bank of America accounts put on hold due to signs of potential fraudulent activity, requiring account holders to verify their identities through ID.me to continue to access funds. Of those accounts, less than one percent of account holders passed the identity verification requirement.

Since March, DES has issued over \$12.2 billion in assistance to over 2 million claimants and has implemented numerous fraud prevention measures for unemployment benefit programs. DES continues to work closely with data analytics companies, financial institutions, and state and federal partners to review claims and identify those eligible for benefits, as well as those with a high probability of fraud.

ID.me has verified more than 29 million users through partnerships with ten other states and three federal agencies, including Veterans Affairs and the Social Security Administration, to ensure timely services while maintaining the integrity of public programs funded by taxpayers and serves as an expedited pathway for Arizonans to receive PUA benefits. Implementation of the service deters the massive amount of fraud that previously made it difficult for states to find and process legitimate PUA claims. ID.me's verification interface is safe, simple to use and the process takes just minutes to complete. More information about ID.me can be found [here](#).

Due to the significant decrease in suspected fraudulent initial claims from a record high of nearly 570,400 claims filed the week ending October 10, compared to just 6,700 the week ending November 12 after the implementation of ID.me, DES is expanding this partnership to detect fraud among *existing* claimants. This will increase the speed at which the Department can process legitimate claims and ensure individuals eligible for benefits receive timely payments. As the nation continues to see an extraordinary number of fraudulent claims filed using stolen personal information, this is the latest of many [steps](#) DES has taken to expedite benefits to eligible claimants while also safeguarding taxpayer dollars and the integrity of Arizona's unemployment program.

PUA claimants will be notified through direct messaging within the PUA portal and through email in advance of the next phase to provide them ample time to prepare the necessary documentation. Claimants must use the unique ID.me link sent directly to them, as using a shared link will not allow the claimant to verify their identity. After the claimant has successfully verified their identity, they can continue filing their weekly certification. The ID.me service is accessible and easy to use for almost all claimants. For claimants who are unable to verify their identity through ID.me, they should contact DES right away to verify their identity with another method. Claimants who have already verified their identities through ID.me will not have to go through the process a second time.

For more information about unemployment insurance in Arizona, visit www.azui.com.

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