



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **DES Launches Pandemic Unemployment Assistance**

### ***More than \$350 Million In Initial Payments Sent to 165,000 Individuals***

**PHOENIX – (May 11, 2020)** The Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) announced today the launch of the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program for individuals who were previously ineligible for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits, including self-employed, independent contractors, and gig economy workers.

DES is mailing checks today to 165,000 individuals who filed an initial claim for benefits between February 2, 2020, and May 2, 2020, and did not meet the criteria for regular UI, but do meet the eligibility criteria for PUA. These individuals will receive an initial payment representing the minimum PUA benefit amount (\$117 per week) plus the additional \$600 in weekly benefits added by the CARES Act. These first payments will include three-weeks' worth of benefits.

“The Department of Economic Security has worked around the clock to stand up this new program and get these benefits to Arizonans faster,” said Governor Ducey. “Getting assistance to those in need will continue to be a priority as we work to gradually and safely re-energize Arizona’s economy.”

“DES recognizes how critical this funding is for many individuals who do not qualify for regular unemployment insurance,” said Tom Betlach, from the Office of the Director. “We are making these initial payments totaling more than \$350 million to get money into the pockets of Arizonans as quickly as possible.”

Pandemic unemployment benefits are available for weeks of unemployment beginning February 2, 2020 through the week ending December 26, 2020. PUA provides a benefit ranging from \$117 to \$240 per week, for up to 39 weeks. Individuals receiving PUA benefits will also receive an additional \$600 weekly in Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation benefits between the weeks of March 29, 2020 and July 25, 2020.

**Beginning at 6:00 p.m. on May 12, 2020**, applicants will be able to access the PUA system to provide information needed to confirm ongoing eligibility (or, for new applicants, determine initial eligibility) and to determine the weekly benefit amounts. Over the weekend, DES notified workers who previously applied for UI and were denied for being monetarily ineligible about the additional information needed, and those individuals will get an updated communication today with additional information. If an individual does not know whether their claim was denied for

being “monetarily ineligible” or for some other reason, he or she can check the status of their claim online by logging into their account on the DES [claims website](#).

Per federal requirements, new applicants may need to file a regular UI claim based on their particular circumstances. If they are denied for regular UI benefits, beginning May 12, they can then file a PUA claim.

Beginning on May 12, individuals will also receive a formal notice from DES about PUA, and additional specifics on which documentation can be used to determine ongoing eligibility (which includes but is not limited to 2019 tax information) will be provided on the PUA application site. Both new applicants and individuals who were previously denied will submit documentation through [www.azui.com](http://www.azui.com) (File a Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Claim). Federal requirements for PUA use wages and/or self-employment information from calendar year 2019 to determine the PUA benefit. Specifics on which documentation can be used to determine ongoing eligibility (which includes but is not limited to 2019 tax information) will also be provided on the PUA application site.

**Beginning May 17, 2020**, individuals must also file weekly certifications for each week for which they are claiming eligibility for benefits, including retroactive certifications back to their last date of employment. Individuals will have to file certifications for each week for which they are claiming eligibility for benefits in order to receive payments. Individuals who have already received the initial phase of payment will not see the option to certify for the three weeks for which they have already been paid.

**The fastest way to receive PUA benefits will be through direct deposit.** Individuals can provide financial information to register for direct deposit through the PUA system. If they do not register for direct deposit, they will receive an Electronic Payment Card (EPC) through Bank of America.

Visit <https://des.az.gov/pua> for updates and additional information.

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