

**PHILADELPHIA UNEMPLOYMENT PROJECT
and UNEMPLOYMENT INFORMATION CENTER**



Organizing for justice and serving the unemployed

05/23/2021

Unemployed Traveling to Harrisburg to Demand Payments of Unemployment Benefits

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE;

Unemployed workers affiliated with the Philadelphia Unemployment Project (PUP) will be traveling to Harrisburg on Monday May 24th 2021 to attend the Pennsylvania House of Representatives Labor and Industry Public on Unemployment Compensation System update and claimant's transition to work. They also plan to deliver a letter to Governor Wolf asking for help for hundreds of thousands with delayed unemployment compensation.

Over 300,000 PA workers are currently pending determination and tens of thousands more have had their benefits stopped without notice. The US Dept. of Labor and Industry standard for states distribution of unemployment benefits is 80% distribution within a 21 days period. Pennsylvania hasn't reached that goal since April of last year, (See Below).

PUP and laid off workers from western Pennsylvania will be bringing their demand that the state "Pay Our Benefits Now." PUP will be joined by the members of the Mon-Valley Unemployed Committee based in Pittsburgh.

"This crisis for the unemployed has been going on since last March and people need their benefits now", said Adrienne Berry, an unemployed small business owner who is traveling to Harrisburg on Monday.

We will be departing PUP Headquarters 112 N. Broad St at 7:30am on 05/24/21 in order to participate in the 10:30am Public Hearing in Irvis Building Rm 515

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Benefits: Timeliness and Quality Reports

ALL FIRST PAYMENT TIMELINESS REPORT FOR 03/01/2020 THROUGH 01/31/2021

STATE	Total Workload	<=7 Days	14 Days <i>(**wv=Y)</i>	21 Days <i>(**wv=N)</i>	28 Days	35 Days	42 Days	49 Days	56 Days	63 Days	70 Days	> 70 Days
Pennsylvania												
<i>*Waiting week from 03/01/2020 to 01/31/2021.</i>												
01/31/2021	45,165	5.0%	64.6%	73.6%	77.8%	80.6%	82.5%	83.8%	84.8%	85.6%	86.4%	100.0%
12/31/2020	42,608	5.6%	61.6%	69.7%	73.1%	75.4%	76.8%	77.9%	78.9%	79.9%	81.0%	100.0%
11/30/2020	24,119	3.9%	44.4%	50.7%	54.5%	57.0%	59.2%	61.0%	62.7%	64.2%	65.9%	100.0%
10/31/2020	23,332	4.0%	41.2%	47.8%	52.0%	54.9%	57.5%	59.8%	61.7%	63.5%	65.3%	100.0%
09/30/2020	28,006	3.7%	45.0%	51.9%	55.6%	58.4%	61.1%	63.8%	66.4%	68.9%	71.7%	100.0%
08/31/2020	43,251	3.0%	34.2%	41.1%	47.2%	52.1%	56.4%	59.8%	62.9%	65.7%	68.6%	100.0%
07/31/2020	72,200	3.7%	51.2%	57.6%	62.0%	65.2%	67.9%	70.4%	72.8%	75.5%	78.4%	100.0%
06/30/2020	87,683	3.6%	44.8%	51.2%	55.9%	60.2%	65.7%	71.6%	78.4%	84.4%	90.7%	100.0%
05/31/2020	174,697	3.2%	43.1%	54.4%	64.8%	76.1%	87.9%	94.8%	98.2%	99.4%	99.7%	100.0%
04/30/2020	636,117	4.9%	70.8%	89.3%	97.6%	99.6%	99.9%	99.9%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
03/31/2020	16,150	78.1%	90.8%	94.3%	95.6%	96.4%	97.2%	98.0%	98.6%	99.0%	99.3%	100.0%

* First Payment Promptness -% of all first payments made within 14/21 days (14 days if a waiting week ((wv)) is required, and 21 days if no waiting week ((wv)) is required) after the compensable week./ UIPL-21-04

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Governor Thomas Wolf
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Harrisburg, PA 17120

On behalf of tens of thousands of unemployed Pennsylvanians, we are asking you to resolve the unemployment compensation crisis.

Numerous press accounts have outlined the chaos of the system and reported on the thousands of people who have been unable to receive their unemployment benefits for weeks or months at a time. PUP has received over 1,200 contacts from claimants for help collecting their benefits since mid-January. Right now, there are 289,000 claimants awaiting a determination of their benefits and thus not receiving their checks. It is estimated that it will take 6 months to clear the backlog. Many thousands of additional claimants have had their benefits halted without proper notice and are waiting for checks. There is no plan to deal with this tremendous crush of families without funds.

We believe that the answer is to Pay Benefits Now. The US Department of Labor requires that state UC systems determine eligibility in 21 days for 80% of claimants, in order to be in compliance. PA is not meeting this standard and has not for the entire pandemic. Thousands are without income for long periods as a result. We believe that benefits must be given to people after 21 days if the state does not have the capacity to determine their eligibility by that time. They should then continue to determine their eligibility. This will provide needed benefits to hundreds of thousands immediately. If ultimately the state finds the claimant ineligible, they would have a non-fault overpayment, payable out of future unemployment compensation. Other states (CA and VT for two), when confronted with this crisis, paid benefits without determining eligibility first. Also, benefits that have been stopped without written notice must be reinstated.

Obviously in normal times eligibility would be decided before benefits are paid, but these are not normal times. If the issue is preventing fraud vs. allowing hundreds of thousands to starve, we believe that preventing destitution is by far the greater good and must be the goal of the Department of Labor and Industry. We see this as the first viable solution to a year long night mare. Please act now, on behalf of suffering Pennsylvania citizens. Thank you.

Sincerely,

John Dodds, Director

289,000 Pennsylvanians are waiting for eligibility rulings on their unemployment benefits.

Thousands of other Pennsylvania residents are seeing their existing benefits stopped with no explanation or recourse.

These issues have gone on since the pandemic began, over a year ago.

The state has no plan to solve these problems as hundreds of thousands of victims of the pandemic are doing without any income for weeks and months.



A system that can only eliminate fraud by forcing hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians to wait months for their benefits while the state tries to make a decision on their eligibility is not acceptable.

Pay Our Benefits Now!

The Philadelphia Unemployment Project advocates that claimants who wait longer than 3 weeks to receive an eligibility determination receive unemployment payments immediately.

The unemployed must not be the scapegoats and victims of an out-of-control system!

Fact Sheet on Delayed Unemployment Benefits

The Problem

- There is a backlog of nearly 290,000 unemployment claimants in the state of Pennsylvania whose benefits are being held while the state has not yet determined their eligibility, according to the Department of Labor and Industry.
- It's estimated that this backlog will take well over six months to process.
- The US Department of Labor has a standard that 80% of cases have an eligibility determination within 21 days and 87% of claims are paid within 14 days. Pennsylvania is failing to meet this standard, as tens of thousands suffer without their benefits.
- Aside from claimants with undetermined eligibility, many Pennsylvania residents are seeing their existing benefits stopped with no explanation or recourse.
- The State is marching forward in June with a new computer system, which means they won't be working on this problem, which in fact will become worse.

The Solution

- Benefits must be given to people after 21 days, if the state does not have the capacity to determine their eligibility by that time. Benefits that have been stopped without written notice must be reinstated.
- By existing regulation, claimants who incorrectly receive benefits not resulting from willful misrepresentation on their part would merely pay back any overpayment out of future benefits.
- A system that can only eliminate fraud by forcing hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians to wait months for their benefits while the state tries to make a decision on their eligibility is not acceptable.
- The unemployed must not be the scapegoats and victims of an out-of-control system.