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PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration Announces Implementation Of CARES Act Unemployment Benefits For Self-Employed, Gig Economy And Other Workers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

Governor's Press Office

Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

Department of Unemployment Assistance

MEDIA CONTACT

Sarah Finlaw, Press Secretary, Governor's Office

Phone

(617) 725-4025 (tel:6177254025)

Online

gov.press@state.ma.us (mailto:gov.press@state.ma.us)

BOSTON — The Baker-Polito Administration announced today that Massachusetts residents who are not eligible for regular unemployment benefits can now apply online for the new Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program.

The new federal PUA program provides up to 39 weeks of unemployment benefits who are unable to work because of a COVID-19-related reason but are not eligible for regular or extended unemployment benefits. This includes self-employed workers, independent

contractors, gig economy workers, and those with limited work history. Applicants can learn more and apply at **www.mass.gov/pua** (/pua).

"As a Commonwealth, we are committed to doing everything in our power, and moving as urgently as possible to get workers impacted by the COVID-19 crisis the benefits they deserve," **said Governor Charlie Baker.** "With the implementation of this new federal benefit program, we can better support workers not normally covered by the unemployment system like those who are self-employed or work in the gig economy."

"The COVID-19 pandemic has upended the lives of workers across the Commonwealth, and our Administration is doing everything we can to help," **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito.** "The implementation of the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program in Massachusetts is another important step in our efforts to help those who are economically disrupted by this virus."

To be eligible for this new program, individuals must provide self-certification that they are otherwise able and available to work but are prevented from doing so by circumstances relating to COVID-19, including their own illness or that of a family member.

Those able to telework with pay and individuals receiving paid sick or other leave will not qualify for PUA. Individuals receiving paid sick leave or other paid leave benefits for less than their customary work week, however, may still be eligible for PUA. Also, those working fewer hours, resulting in a loss of income due to COVID-19, who are not eligible for regular unemployment benefits may be eligible for PUA.

"It is vital that our workforce gets the resources and help they need during this critical time," **said Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Rosalin Acosta.** "I'm proud of everything our team is doing to rapidly implement new programs, and ensure that as many eligible workers as possible get some relief."

The federal CARES Act signed into law on March 27 created PUA, as well as another temporary federal program called Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) that provides an additional $600 weekly benefit for those receiving unemployment benefits or PUA. FPUC provides that additional benefit through July 25,

2020. The Commonwealth **announced implementation of FPUC earlier this month.** (/news/massachusetts-announces-initial-implementation-of-new-federal-unemployment-benefits-from-0)

All approved PUA applications will initially receive the minimum weekly benefit amount, plus the additional $600 FPUC weekly benefit. Once a worker's wages are verified, weekly benefit amounts may increase. The amount of PUA benefits received is based on the individual's reported previous income. PUA benefits may not be more than the state's maximum weekly benefit rate for regular unemployment, which is $823 in Massachusetts.

Weekly benefits, including any increase to your weekly benefit amount, will be retroactive to January 27, 2020, or the date when you became unemployed, whichever is more recent, as long as you became unable to work because of a COVID-19 related reason.

PUA Application Process:

To apply, individuals must provide their Social Security number or US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) number if not a citizen of the United States, and their wage records for 2019, which includes 1099 forms, pay stubs, or bank statements. Applicants will also need the Social Security numbers and dates of birth for dependent children and, if requesting direct deposit for payment, your bank account and routing numbers. A full list of required documents is available at **www.mass.gov/pua** (/pua).

Please note that, initially, the system can only pay benefits retroactively to the week ending March 14, 2020. Eligible workers will be able to certify for benefits, and will be able to request benefits retroactively to January 27, 2020, if their dates of unemployment make them eligible.

Individuals who are determined ineligible for PUA will receive a written disqualification along with information on how to pursue an appeal. Additional information about the appeals process will be separately posted at a later date. Please visit **www.mass.gov/dua** (/dua) for the latest information.

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Media Contact

Sarah Finlaw, Press Secretary, Governor's Office

Phone

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Online

gov.press@state.ma.us (mailto:gov.press@state.ma.us)

Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

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Governor Charlie Baker, Lt. Governor Karyn Polito and the Baker-Polito Administration are working to respond to the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak and keep Massachusetts residents safe and healthy.

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EOLWD manages the Commonwealth's workforce development and labor departments to ensure that workers, employers, and the unemployed have the tools and training needed to succeed in the Massachusetts economy.

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT OF UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

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DUA oversees the unemployment insurance (UI) program, which provides temporary income assistance to eligible workers in Massachusetts. DUA also determines and collects employer contributions to the UI program.

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