NJ Labor Dept. Helps Parents Navigate Benefits Amid COVID-19 in the New School Year

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TRENTON – The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development has produced new materials to help parents and guardians determine what income-replacement, paid leave, and job protection benefits are available to them if their children's school or daycare is closed for in-person learning, either full- or part-time.

A new webpage provides parents with plain-language explanations of benefits and protections that may be utilized when remote learning is mandatory, or for the days children are required to be at home if they're attending school on alternate days.

Available benefits include Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), a federal benefit, paid leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), and job-protected leave under New Jersey Family Leave Act. These benefits are available to a primary caregiver who is unable to work due to their child's remote learning. The webpage provides specific examples to help parents and guardians determine which benefit programs could fit their needs.

Additionally, an online eligibility tool – https://getstarted.nj.gov/labor/ – helps caregivers determine on-the-spot which benefits they may be eligible for, based on their current work and home situations.

"Working and out-of-work parents and guardians have questions about how to manage work or unemployment benefits when their children must learn remotely," said Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo. "We are trying to make it as easy as possible to navigate the benefits and protections available to working and nonworking parents and guardians whose children have recently begun a new school year."

Paid leave under FFCRA and federal unemployment assistance are available when remote learning is mandatory, not when it's optional. For children participating in mandated hybrid models – which most New Jersey districts have chosen – these benefits may be available for the days the child is at home. In addition, many New Jersey residents are covered under the New Jersey Family Leave Act, which provides up to 12 weeks of job-protected leave to care for a loved one, including a child, if their school or place of care is closed due to COVID-19.

The new webpage includes frequently asked questions, links to relevant laws, and more. The eligibility tool determines in three questions which benefits and job protections parents and guardians may be eligible for.

Information on the webpage and within the eligibility tool do not constitute legal advice, nor does it guarantee eligibility for benefits. However, both resources can help parents and guardians make the best decisions possible for themselves and their families amid COVID-19.

The NJ Division on Civil Rights enforces the New Jersey Family Leave Act. For more information, visit NJCivilRights.gov and https://www.nj.gov/oag/dcr/downloads/fact-FLA.pdf.

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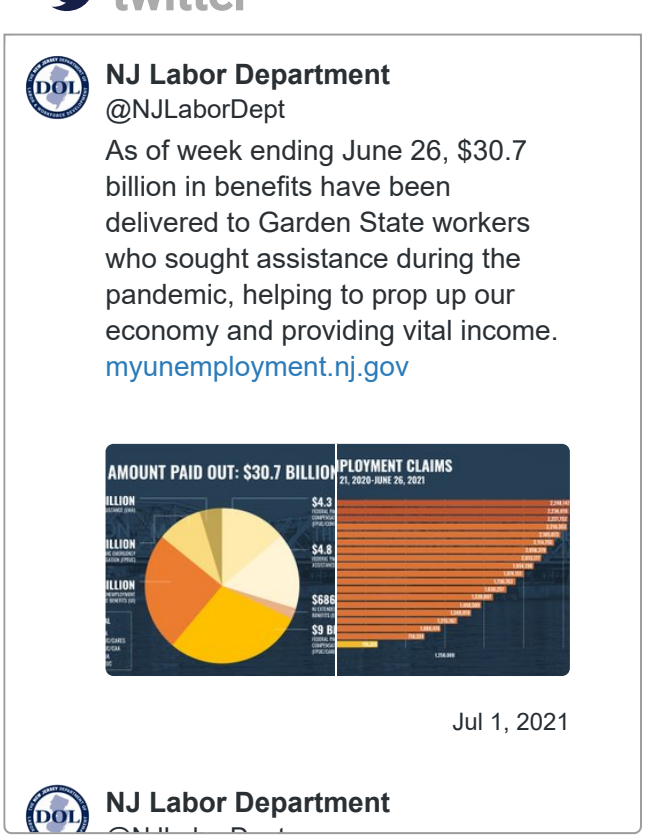

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