



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
No. 058 – March 22, 2020

For more information contact:

[Jason Moon](#)
517-282-0041

Workers affected by COVID-19 provided emergency relief through governor's actions to expand unemployment benefits

Nearly 110,000 workers filed for benefits since governor's order

LANSING, MICH. As thousands of employees across Michigan are impacted by COVID-19, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's [Executive Order](#) signed on Monday to expand unemployment benefits continues to provide emergency relief to the state's working families. While experiencing a tremendous increase in demand, Michigan's unemployment system continues to serve customers.

"We understand that COVID-19 has caused economic harm to our workers as sacrifices are made to protect all of our residents. Extending and expanding unemployment benefits has provided emergency relief to many Michiganders," said Jeff Donofrio, director of the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity. "Even though we've seen an unprecedented need for emergency financial assistance, Michigan's unemployment system, and its hardworking staff, continue to provide critical help online and over the phone. Michiganders impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic should continue to visit michigan.gov/UIA or call 866-500-0017 to apply for benefits."

The latest data shows 108,710 unemployment claims were filed between last Monday and Friday, compared to a normal average of around 5,000 claims – an approximate 2,100% increase. States from around the country have experienced similar increases in unemployment claims as a result of COVID-19. Unemployment Insurance Agency (UIA) benefits are funded by a \$4.6 billion trust fund which has been built up over the last 10 years.

Eligible employees are strongly encouraged to apply for unemployment benefits online at Michigan.gov/UIA or by calling 866-500-0017. A [factsheet on how to apply for benefits](#) can also be found online.

UIA offices will continue to serve the public, but lobbies are only open to residents with appointments.

The governor's [Executive Order 2020-10](#) also expands unemployment benefits to:

- **Sick Workers:** Workers who are sick, quarantined, or immunocompromised and who do not have access to paid family and medical leave or are laid off.
- **Workers Caring for Loved Ones:** Workers who have an unanticipated family care responsibility, including those who have childcare responsibilities due to school closures, or those who are forced to care for loved ones who become ill and who do not have access to paid family and medical leave or are laid off

A PROUD tradition of SERVICE through EXCELLENCE, INTEGRITY, and COURTESY since 1917

- **First responders:** Individuals working in the public health community who become ill or are quarantined due to exposure to COVID-19 and who do not have access to paid family and medical leave or are laid off.

The [governor's order](#) also extends access to benefits for unemployed workers:

- **Increased Weeks:** Benefits will be increased from 20 to 26 weeks.
- **Longer Application Time:** The application eligibility period will be increased from 14 to 28 days.
- **Fewer Requirements:** The in-person registration and work search requirements will be suspended.

For Self Employed Workers

The State is also seeking solutions for self-employed workers and independent contractors who traditionally do not have access to unemployment insurance. The governor has requested that President Trump issue a Major Disaster Declaration so that Individual Assistance and Disaster Unemployment Assistance through FEMA may be made available to additional Michiganders affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Help for Employers

Under the [governor's order](#), an employer or employing unit must not be charged for unemployment benefits if their employees become unemployed because of an executive order requiring them to close or limit operations.

The order also expands the State's [Work Share](#) program. Employers are encouraged to implement the program that permits employers to maintain business operations during declines in regular activity instead of laying off workers. More information about Work Share is available online at www.michigan.gov/WorkShare.

Due to the uncertainty regarding potential congressional action regarding whether furloughed workers will be able to access federal resources, employers are urged to place employees on temporary leave as opposed to termination. To view the State's guidance for employers contemplating potential layoffs, visit [here](#).

[Unemployment Resources for Employers.](#)

[Unemployment Resources for Employees.](#)

Additional resources for employees and employers related to COVID-19 can be found the state's website [here](#).

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at Michigan.gov/Coronavirus and CDC.gov/Coronavirus.

###