



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) now available to Arkansans *Program provides support to self-employed along with others*

LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas (May 4, 2020) – Today, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services announced that Arkansas' self-employed workers and independent contractors who are out of work because of COVID-19 can apply for federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance beginning tomorrow, May 5. Applicants may apply online 7 days a week from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. by visiting ARunemployment.com. Those wishing to file may also call the hotline number at 1-844-908-2178 between the hours of 6 a.m. and 4 p.m. Central Standard Time (CST).

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, or PUA, is a federal program for people who are not eligible for regular state unemployment benefits, extended benefits or Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), and are unemployed, partially unemployed, or unable to work due to COVID-19.

This includes:

- Self-employed workers
- Independent contractors
- Non-profit employees
- Gig economy workers (flexible or freelance work, often conducted via online platform)
- Individuals who work for employers exempt from participating in the regular UI program
- Part-Time workers without enough work history to qualify for regular UI benefits
- Individuals impacted by COVID-19 but not eligible for regular UI benefits due to a prior disqualification

The program provides up to 39 weeks of benefits with weekly payments ranging from \$133 to \$451, based on income from the previous tax year (2019). The assistance period begins with the week ending February 8, 2020 and ends with the week ending December 26, 2020. For those who qualify, the program will apply retroactively to the date they became unemployed due to a qualifying COVID-19 related reason. Benefits cannot be paid for any time period

prior to the week ending February 8, 2020 and cannot be paid for any time subsequent to the week ending December 26, 2020.

PUA recipients will also automatically qualify for an additional \$600 each week for the first 13 weeks of eligibility under the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program. This will apply for the time period of the week ending April 4, 2020 through the week ending July 25, 2020.

“The PUA program will sustain thousands of hard-working, entrepreneurial Arkansans that have lost income due to the COVID-19 public health crisis,” said Governor Asa Hutchinson. “We understand the economic burden on the self-employed and the sense of urgency for financial relief. We’ve assembled a team that understands this need and looks forward to serving their fellow Arkansans.”

“COVID-19 slammed the brakes on our state’s thriving economy, which included a growing number of self-employed Arkansans and independent contractors,” said Mike Preston, Secretary of the Arkansas Department of Commerce. “This is a critical segment of Arkansas’ workforce and we want to ensure everyone who is eligible for these funds takes advantage of this support.”

To learn more about the eligibility requirements, or to file your application for PUA benefits, please go to www.arunemployment.com or call 1-844-908-2178 between the hours of 6 a.m. and 4 p.m. Central Standard Time (CST).

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About the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services:

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services is a division of the Arkansas Department of Commerce. ADWS administers Arkansas’ Unemployment Insurance program and facilitates employer compliance with the Arkansas Employment Security Law, collects unemployment insurance contributions from employers, provides unemployment insurance benefits to those eligible, and maintains management information systems for filing unemployment insurance claims and fraud detection.



About the Arkansas Department of Commerce:

The Arkansas Department of Commerce is the umbrella department for workforce and economic development drivers. Its divisions and regulatory boards include Division of Aeronautics, Waterways Commission, Wine Producers Council, Division of Workforce Services, Office of Skills Development, State Bank Department, Insurance Department, Securities Department, Economic Development Commission and Development Finance Authority. It was established July 2019 as part of Governor Asa Hutchinson’s wide-sweeping efficiency and transformation efforts to reduce 42 cabinet agencies to 15 while maintaining services for all Arkansans.