

UNEMPLOYMENT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Q: How has the new *Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021* (COVID relief law) extended existing pandemic unemployment programs?

A: The COVID relief law extended all pandemic unemployment insurance programs from the end of December 2020 to April 2021, including Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC).

Q: How does federal supplemental support effect unemployment assistance in Hawaii?

A: Starting from the week of December 27, 2020, and ending the week of March 14, 2021, \$300 per week will be available for eligible workers in Hawaii from the federal government to supplement state unemployment.

Q: I have not been able to create an unemployment insurance account. Does this mean that I will lose out on available benefits?

A: Hawaii Department of Labor & Industrial Relations (DLIR) has been experiencing an extraordinarily high volume of users attempting to file claims. DLIR is working continuously to upgrade its telephonic and web server capacity, and the *Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021* (COVID relief law) includes additional funding to help DLIR do so. If you have trouble getting through, please try again. Technical difficulties may initially prevent you from filing your initial claim or your weekly claim certifications. However, your unemployment benefits will be backdated to the date you were separated from your job or had your hours reduced, not the date on which you were able to file your claim with DLIR.

Q: Will the additional payment of \$300 weekly unemployment benefits be taxable?

A: Yes. Regular unemployment insurance is taxed as income, as are the expanded temporary unemployment benefits established in the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security* (CARES) Act (P.L. 116-136) and the *Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021* (COVID relief law).

Q: Will individuals already on Hawaii state unemployment insurance be able to extend their coverage under the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security* (CARES) Act?

A: Yes. If you exhaust the weeks of unemployment compensation available to you through Hawaii law, you will be eligible for an additional 11 weeks of benefits as a result of the *Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021* (COVID relief law). These benefits will be federally funded, but you will still receive them through the state. The extension will occur automatically for those who were on benefits as of the effective date of the *CARES Act*. Work search requirements have been waived by the governor.

Q: How do I file for unemployment benefits as a self-employed worker or independent contractors?

A: The *Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of* (COVID relief law) provides funding to extend the existing CARES Act unemployment assistance program, called Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, for which self-employed and part time workers are eligible. To begin your application process, please visit the Hawaii Department of Labor & Industrial Relations (DLIR) website: pua.hawaii.gov. **Even if you were initially denied benefits, DLIR will be able to reassess your application on this new platform.**

Q: Are all individuals eligible for unemployment insurance regardless of their immigration status?

A: Unemployment benefits are available to those workers who are authorized to work in the United States.