Joint Committee on Unemployment Insurance Oversight Briefing

Tiffany P. Robinson, Secretary
Dayne Freeman, Assistant Secretary

Wednesday, June 23, 2021
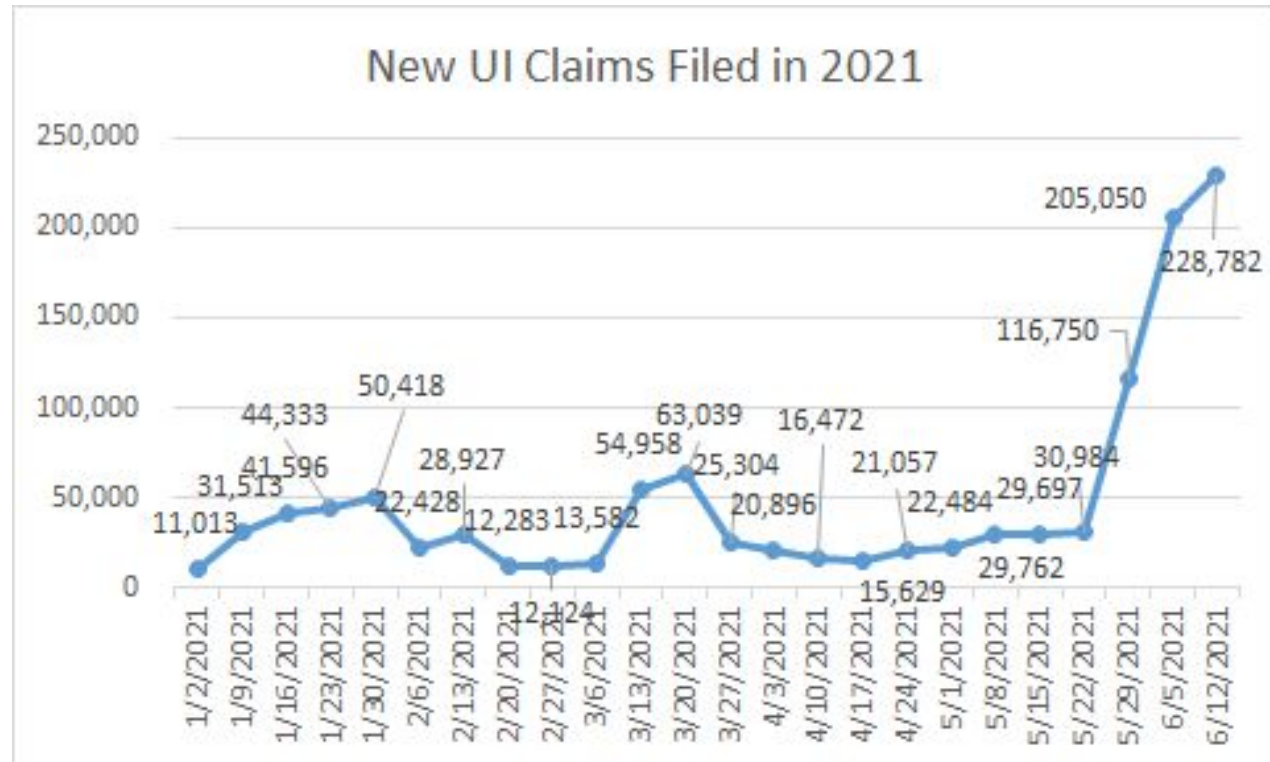
labor.maryland.gov

MDunemployment.com

Maryland
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

COVID-19 Unemployment Volume by the Numbers

Since the Beginning of COVID-19

- As of the week ending June 12, over **2,789,893** new UI claims have been filed.

- Paid over **$12.6 BILLION** in state and federal benefits

- Over **27.6 MILLION** weekly claim certifications filed and over **23.6 MILLION** certifications paid

- Adjudicated over **2.5 MILLION** claim issues

- Added **1,840** new unemployment insurance employees (1,390 call center, 350 adjudicators, and 100 state staff)

- Virtual agent conducted over **2.9 MILLION** conversations

- Averted nearly **6,000 layoffs averted** through the Work Sharing Program and over **21,000 jobs saved** through the Layoff Aversion Fund.

2021 New Claims

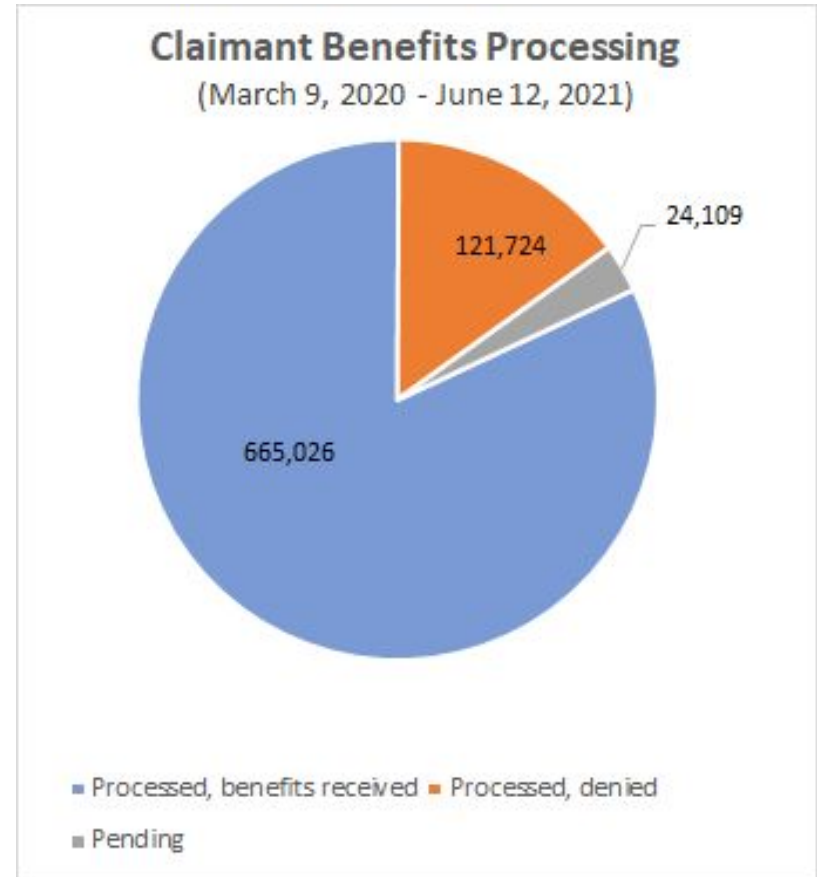## New UI Claims Filed in 2021

- Since the beginning of 2021, we have already received **over 1,149,081 new claims**.
- Weekly new claim data broken down by county and program is available on our website and the data is updated every Thursday morning at 8:30 a.m.
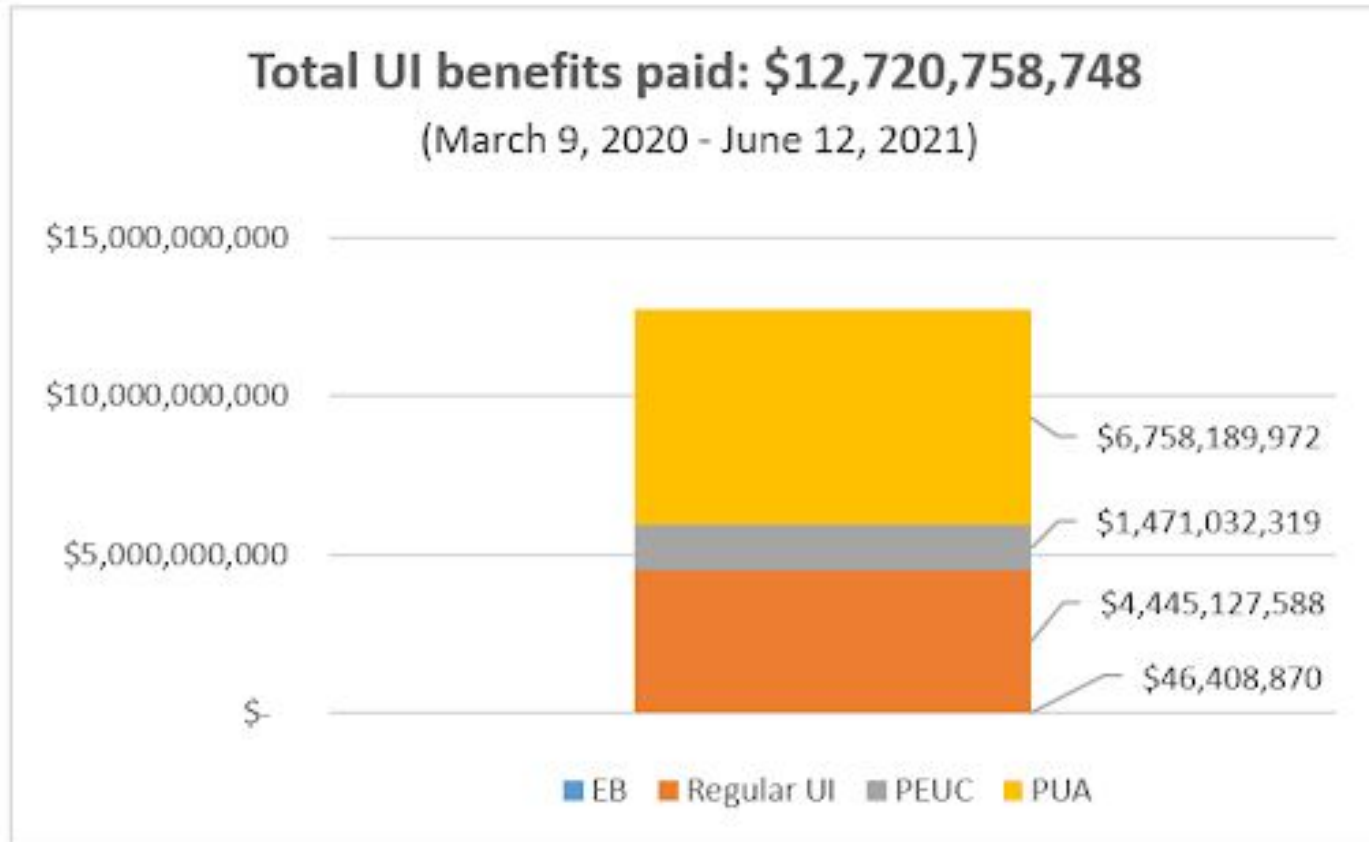
Current Unemployment Statistics

Processing as of Week Ending June 12

- Total Benefits Paid - $12,720,758,748
- Complete Claims Filed - 810,859
- Processed - 786,750 (97%) claims
  - Paid - 655,026 (82%) claims
  - Denied - 121,724 (15%) claims
- Pending - 24,109 (3%)
  - Nearly all of the pending claims are disputed and pending further investigation. These claims cannot be processed until they are investigated due to conflicting information provided by the claimant and the claimant's previous employer.

Claimant Benefits Processing
(March 9, 2020 - June 12, 2021)

24,109

121,724

665,026

- Processed, benefits received
- Processed, denied
- Pending

State and Federal Benefits Paid to Claimants

Total UI benefits paid: $12,720,758,748

(March 9, 2020 - June 12, 2021)

	Amount
PUA	$6,758,189,972
PEUC	$1,471,032,319
Regular UI	$4,445,127,588
EB	$46,408,870

Legend: EB, Regular UI, PEUC, PUA

Unemployment Fraud

- **508,000 potentially fraudulent claims detected since May 2, 2021**
- Since the beginning of the pandemic, over 1.3 million claims flagged and investigated confirmed as fraudulent
  - With aggressive security measures in place, Labor continues to investigate potentially fraudulent in-state and out-of-state claims. To date, 1,344,599 (92.23%) of claims flagged and investigated have been confirmed as fraudulent.
  - Of the 339,083 out-of-state claims that have been identified as potentially fraudulent, 317,545 (93.65%) have either not uploaded the verification documentation requested or their documentation has been reviewed and denied.
  - Of the 1,118,829 in-state claims that have been identified as potentially fraudulent, 1,027,054 (91.80%) have either not uploaded the verification documentation requested or their documentation has been reviewed and denied.
  - Of the 1,457,912 total claims flagged, there are 37,088 (2.54%) in-state and out-of-state potentially fraudulent claims pending review.

Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund

- **Trust Fund Balance**
  - Fund balance - $406,918,894.42 (as of June 21, 2021)
  - Loan balance - $68,528,255.70 (as of June 21, 2021)
    - Interest free until Sept 5th

- Both the Governor and the General Assembly took various actions throughout the session to provide relief for employers.
  - The Governor issued an Executive Order that reduced individual employer's tax burden for calendar year 2020 by non-charging for benefits awarded during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the RELIEF Act further extended that policy.
  - The RELIEF Act gave additional relief for small businesses and allows small businesses that employ less than 50 people to defer paying unemployment insurance taxes for 2021 to January 31, 2022.
  - In addition, the Governor and legislative leaders announced that $1.1 billion from federal funds would be allocated to the Trust Fund. This was in coordination with SB 811, which will result in employers being in Table C for calendar years 2022 and 2023.

Search for Work

- Effective Sunday, July 4, 2021, to maintain eligibility for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits, claimants must actively search for work during each week that they request benefit payments.

- To satisfy the active search for work requirement, claimants must:
    - complete their registration with the Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE);
    - complete at least three valid reemployment activities per week, which must include at least one job contact; and
    - enter their completed reemployment activities in the Work Search Log (located in the MWE).

- Claimants have already received their first communication from the department with a reminder that search for work activities must begin on July 4. Email communication with additional information and tutorials will be sent over the next two weeks and will continue after the search for work requirement begins.

Legislation Update

- **SB 816/ HB 908 - Unemployment Insurance - Employer Contributions and Reimbursement Payments**

- **SB 817/ HB 907 - Unemployment Insurance - Study on System Reforms**

- **SB 818/ HB 1138 - Unemployment Insurance – Maryland Department of Labor – Accountability and Oversight**

- **SB 819/ HB 1139 - Unemployment Insurance - Weekly Benefit Amount - Income Disregard**

- **SB 893/ HB 1002 - Unemployment - Insurance Revisions and Special Enrollment Period for Health Benefits**

- **SB 771/ HB 1143 - Unemployment Insurance - Work Sharing (Work Share Expansion Act of 2021)**

Resources for Claimants

DWDAL Resources

Maryland Workforce Exchange

Website: https://mwejobs.maryland.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx

- This powerful online tool offers job seekers the ability to easily apply for jobs, create resumes, explore career fields, find education and training opportunities, connect with an American Job Center, and more.

Registered Apprenticeship

Website: http://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/appr/

- Registered Apprenticeship is an "earn and learn" training model that combines paid on-the-job training with classroom instruction to progressively increase workers' skill levels and wages. As an "earn and learn" strategy, Registered Apprenticeship offers jobseekers immediate employment opportunities with sustainable wages and advancement along a career pathway.

Youth Apprenticeship

Website: http://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/appr/youthappr.shtml

- The Apprenticeship Maryland Program gives high school juniors and seniors in 20 jurisdictions a head start on their future career by earning a wage and learning valuable job skills through an apprenticeship.

DWDAL Resources

EARN Maryland

Website: http://labor.maryland.gov/earn/earnprograms.shtml

- EARN Maryland training offers job seekers an opportunity to develop new skills and train for careers in in-demand industry sectors, like biotechnology, manufacturing, and cyber security.

Work Sharing Unemployment Insurance Program

Website: http://labor.maryland.gov/whatsnews/uiwsad.shtml

- The state's Work Sharing Unemployment Insurance Program is a flexible reopening strategy where employees can work at reduced hours while collecting partial unemployment benefits to make up a portion of the lost wages.

Job Fairs

Website: https://www.dllr.state.md.us/employment/jobfairs.shtml

- Labor has 21 events planned for June and July with more in the planning stages.

American Job Centers

Website: http://labor.maryland.gov/county/

- Maryland has 30 American Job Centers which are "one stop shops," providing free help to job seekers for a variety of career and employment-related needs. Workforce professionals are available to provide a full range of in-person and virtual services to job seekers through these centers.

Contact Information

- **Online Inquiry Form**
  - The online inquiry form, located at labor.maryland.gov/UIhelp, is available for claimants, employers, and third party agents.
  - The form collects all necessary information, routes it to the appropriate unit upon submission, and a tracking number is sent via email.
  - Houses all inquiries in one place and prevents duplicative efforts by department staff.

- **Claimant Call Center**
  - To connect a live agent, claimants should call 667-207-6520.
  - Live claims agents are available from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
  - They are also available from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Saturday and 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday.

- **Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System for Claimants**
  - To connect with the IVR system available 24/7, call 410-949-0022 or 1-800-827-4839, toll free.

- **Employer Call Center**
  - To connect with a live agent, employers should call 410-949-0033.

Online Resources

BEACON 2.0

- Claimant Portal
- Employer Portal
- Third Party Agent Portal
- BEACON Claimant User Guide
- BEACON Glossary of Terms
- Download Mobile App in iOS App Store
- Download Mobile App on Google Play

Virtual Agent

- Available on our website to help claimants answer common questions about unemployment insurance and guide them to of our informative resources and tools.

Chat with us

Alert: On December 27, the federal COVID-19 relief package, called the Continued Assistance for Unemployed Workers Act (CAUWA) that extends the CARES Act programs and provides additional federal unemployment benefits, was signed into law. For more information, select "CAUWA (CARES Act extension)".

20 Jan - 8:10 PM

Hi, I'm Dayne, Maryland Department of Labor's Virtual Assistant.

I can help you answer common questions about unemployment benefits. You can select one of these topics or type a different question.

- CAUWA (CARES Act extension)
- Payments & Weekly certifications
- Debit card information
- Unemployment eligibility
- File a new claim

Type your questions here

Frequently Asked Questions

There are over 15 different FAQ's available for both claimants and employers on our website:

- Appeals - Lower Appeals
- Appeals - Board of Appeals
- BEACON System for Claimants
- BEACON System for Employers
- Benefit Payment and Bank of America Debit Card Information
- Claims Filing - Initial Claims
- Claims Filing - Weekly Claims Certifications
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) Related Issues
- Denials and Payments
- Eligibility Requirements
- Overpayments and Fraud
- Work Search
- Work Sharing Information for Employees
- Work Sharing Information for Employers
- Foreign Language

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