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e-Alert

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Massachusetts Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program

Background

With unemployment rates spiking across the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic, both individual states and the federal government have tried to provide support to struggling Americans through state unemployment programs.

Unfortunately, many individuals who do not work as W-2 employees are typically not eligible for these programs because they do not pay into them in the form of payroll withholdings. This includes independent contractors, gig employees, and freelancers, who represent a meaningful portion of the US economy. To help address this, Massachusetts has launched a new Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program. See our summary below, and look [here](#) for more information on filing for unemployment benefits through this program.

Summary

On Monday, April 20, 2020, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker announced a new Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program to provide unemployment benefits to Massachusetts

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residents who are not eligible for traditional unemployment benefits. This includes, but is not limited to self-employed individuals, independent contractors, gig workers, freelancers, and employees with limited work history.

Like regular unemployment benefits, the PUA program offers up to 39 weeks of benefits to individuals who are unable to work for a COVID-19 related reason. Approved applicants will initially receive the minimum weekly benefit of \$268 per week, plus the \$600 per week provided by the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program. Once the applicant's previous wages have been verified, the benefit amount may increase based on previous income, up to a maximum of \$823 per week (not including the \$600 from FPUC).

Unemployment benefits through PUA will be retroactive to January 27, 2020, or the date of unemployment, whichever is later. Keep in mind that this benefit is only available to individuals who have become unable to work due to COVID-19.

Employer Next Steps

- Companies that previously worked with independent contractors, gig workers, or others who may be eligible for the PUA program may want to direct them to the application [link](#).
- Be aware that standard W-2 employees who have been laid off or are unable to work due to COVID-19 would file through the normal unemployment process, not through the PUA program.
- If you have any questions about this e-Alert, please [contact us](#).

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