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Governor Whitmer Expands Unemployment Benefits for Michigan Workers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 16, 2020

Governor Whitmer Expands Unemployment Benefits for Michigan Workers

LANSING, Mich. -- Today, Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed Executive Order 2020-10 to temporarily expand eligibility for unemployment benefits. This executive order is effective immediately and until Tuesday, April 14 at 11:59pm.

Under the governor's order, unemployment benefits would be extended to:

- 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.
- Workers who are sick, quarantined, or immunocompromised and who do not have access to paid family and medical leave or are laid off.
- First responders in the public health community who become ill or are quarantined due to exposure to COVID-19.

"While we work together to mitigate the spread of coronavirus, we must do everything we can to help working families," said **Governor Whitmer**. "This executive order will provide immediate relief to those who can't go to work, and who rely on their paycheck to put food on the table for themselves and their families. I urge everyone to make smart choices at this time, and to do everything in their power to keep themselves and their loved ones safe."

“We know that many families are and will experience economic pain as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic,” said **Jeff Donofrio**, Director of the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity. “Our expansion of unemployment and workers’ compensation benefits is designed to help provide emergency support to Michigan’s working families.”

The State is also seeking solutions for self-employed workers and independent contractors who traditionally do not have access to unemployment insurance.

Access to benefits for unemployed workers will also be extended:

- Benefits will be increased from 20 to 26 weeks.
- The application eligibility period will be increased from 14 to 28 days
- The normal in-person registration and work search requirements will be suspended.

Eligible employees should apply for unemployment benefits online at **Michigan.gov/UIA** or 1-866-500-0017. A factsheet on how to apply for benefits can be found **here**.

Under the 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 operational productivity during declines in regular business activity instead of laying off workers. More information about Work Share can be found **here**.

Additional unemployment resources for employees can be found **here** and for workers **here**.

Governor Whitmer is also seeking additional solutions for small businesses impacted by COVID-19. Earlier this month, Congress passed legislation that makes \$1 billion available to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to provide low-interest loans to small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives, and nonprofits that have suffered substantial economic losses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The governor has informed SBA that she is seeking an Economic Injury Disaster Loan Declaration for the state and has initiated the process to receive the declaration from SBA. Once granted, small businesses in qualifying areas will be able to access low-interest loans through the SBA. In the interim, we are encouraging small businesses that could benefit from SBA loans to start collecting the information they’ll need to complete and submit their application. Examples of information needed can be found **here**. For additional information or to obtain help preparing the loan application in advance of the declaration, please contact the **Michigan SBA offices** in Detroit or Grand Rapids.

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.

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation's (MEDC) call center stands ready to support businesses looking for assistance through other available state programs. For more information, visit MEDC's website: www.michiganbusiness.org or call 888.522.0103. The Michigan Small Business Development Center can also provide resources for small businesses impacted by COVID-19. Visit their website <https://sbdcmichigan.org/small-business-covid19/> for additional information.

Patients with confirmed infection have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

The best prevention for viruses, such as influenza, the common cold or COVID-19 is to:

- If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19, call your health care provider. If you do not have a health care provider, call the nearest hospital.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds. If not available, use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or upper sleeve when coughing or sneezing.

- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- If you are sick, stay home, and avoid contact with others.
- Replace handshakes with elbow bumps.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others when in a public setting.

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

For those who have questions about the state's actions to mitigate the spread of coronavirus, please call the COVID-19 Hotline at 1-888-535-6136 between 8AM - 5PM daily.

