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NJ Labor Dept. Urges Employers, Workers to Remain Vigilant Against Attempted Fraud

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 20, 2020

TRENTON – The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development has blocked at least \$1.2 billion in fraudulent unemployment claims from being paid since COVID-19-related applications deluged the state's system in March. This week – national Fraud Awareness Week – the Department issued a new warning to employers and workers that cases of unemployment fraud are rising across the country.

New Jersey has been lauded for its anti-fraud efforts nationally, and was largely spared from the sophisticated offshore fraud rings that crippled the unemployment systems of other states during the pandemic. Recently, however, many states including New Jersey have reported an uptick in identity theft and phishing scams that can, if not caught, delay benefits to legitimate claimants and negatively affect the experience ratings of employers.

"We are urging every business owner to review their quarterly benefits reports from our department and to be disciplined and vigilant about reporting any inconsistencies to us immediately," said Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo. "In addition to sophisticated anti-fraud measures we have in place, we need you to be our partners in preventing fraud so we stay two steps ahead of these criminals and you don't suffer financially."

The overwhelming majority of attempted fraud is the result of previous, well-known national and international data breaches. The Labor Department's systems have not been breached and remain secure.

The commissioner encourages New Jersey workers to notify the department immediately if they receive communication from the Labor Department that does not apply to their situation, such as if they get a letter to schedule an appointment but they did not apply for benefits, or if their direct deposit account information is changed without their knowledge.

Claimants should be alert to possible fraud, should use strong passwords to protect their accounts, and should not share those passwords with others. Employers should heed notices of unemployment claims by people who are actually on the payroll.

The easiest way to report cases of suspected fraud is to visit [our online portal](#). You can also call our fraud hotline at (609) 777-4304 or fax (609) 292 5593.

Mirroring the success other states have reported in combatting identity theft, the New Jersey Labor Department has added data validation features to its online unemployment benefits application. It has also added cyber crime specialists to answer more fraud-related calls.

"It's important for New Jerseyans to know that we are doing everything in our power to keep even one fraudulent payment from going out the door, to protect businesses from having to pay more for unemployment," said Asaro-Angelo. "Any time there is a large increase in claim volume, attempted fraud goes up as well. We have increased our anti-fraud resources to catch these criminals in their tracks. Now we're asking the public to increase their vigilance as well."

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As of the latest reporting, more than \$33 billion in unemployment benefits have been sent to Garden State workers. With federal benefits set to expire on September 4, we encourage everyone to check your email and visit [MyUnemployment.nj.gov](https://myunemployment.nj.gov) for updates and available resources.



Department of Labor and Workforce Development

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