Maryland
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Port of Baltimore Worker Support Program FAQs

Background

Francis Scott Key Bridge Collapse and the Maryland Response

On March 26, 2024, the Francis Scott Key Bridge (the "Bridge") collapsed after being struck by a large container vessel, blocking the shipping channel. In response, Governor Moore signed an Executive Order ("Order") on April 5, 2024, and the Maryland General Assembly passed the Maryland Protecting Opportunities and Regional Trade Act (the "PORT" Act). The Order and the PORT Act authorize the Maryland Department of Labor to establish certain programs to support individuals impacted by the reduction to Port operations. The Department established the Port of Baltimore Worker Support Program to provide temporary relief payments to Port workers who do not qualify for Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Port workers whose UI benefits are less than their previous income from work at the Port.

FAQs

1. What is the Port of Baltimore Worker Support Program?

The Port of Baltimore Worker Support Program ("Worker Support Program") provides temporary relief payments to Port of Baltimore workers whose pay was reduced because of the Bridge collapse on March 26, 2024.

To be eligible for the Worker Support Program, workers must have regularly performed work at the Port of Baltimore prior to the Bridge collapse on March 26, 2024. Eligible workers will receive up to $430 for each week of reduced pay so long as key criteria is met.

The first week of compensation started March 26, 2024. The final week workers may be eligible for compensation though the Worker Support Program will be June 18 to June 24, 2024. Eligible workers can receive a maximum of 13 weeks of relief if their income and work hours remained reduced from what they earned pre-Bridge collapse.

The Worker Support Program may be modified or terminated by the Department at any future time, depending upon funding, changes in the operating status of the Port of Baltimore, or other factors.

2. What types of workers are eligible for the Worker Support Program?

Groups of workers who are eligible for the program include:
- Individual independent contractors;
- 1099 workers;
- Sole proprietors;
- Members of single person LLCs; and
- W-2 employees.

3. Am I eligible to receive assistance through the Worker Support Program?

You are eligible for this program if you:
- regularly performed paid work at the Port prior to the Bridge collapse, and
- have a reduction in your pay from work at the Port due to the collapse of the Bridge.

4. Am I eligible for this program if I work near the Port but not at the Port?

No, at this time, the program is open to individuals who work at one of the public or private terminals or waterways at the Port.

5. What does "regularly performed paid work at the Port" mean?

This means a worker:
- Was paid at least $5,000 for work performed at one of the public or private terminals or waterways that make up the Port of Baltimore from January 1, 2024 - March 26, 2024; OR
- Performed paid work as an employee or independent contractor that involved travel to or work physically performed at one of the public or private terminals or waterways that make up the Port of Baltimore typically two or more days a week or at least 25 times from January 1, 2024 - March 26, 2024. Travel to the terminals is intended to include travel that is essential to the terminals' business operations, such as travel by truck drivers.

6. What does it mean to have a "reduction in my pay"?

This means you are receiving less pay from your Port work than you were before the Bridge collapsed and you are not receiving enough pay from another job, unemployment benefits, or another employer-provided benefit to make up for the lost pay.

7. How do I apply to the Worker Support Program?

You can apply for the program through https://maryland-dol.submittable.com/submit starting as soon as Friday, April 19th. Workers will be required to upload the following documents to the application portal:

1. U.S. or state government issued photo identification.
2. A real-time photograph taken by smartphone or webcam during the application process.
3. Document that provides proof of access to the Port. This could include:
   - Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC card),
   - Terminal ID Badge,
   - Employer Provided ID Badge, or
   - Other proof of Access to the Port.
4. Two documents that provide proof of work performed at the Port. This could include:
   - 2023 W-2 from Port employer,
   - 2023 1099 from Port contractor,
   - Copy of paystub(s) from 2024 from a Port employer,
   - Canceled check(s) from 2024 from a Port employer/contractor,
   - Evidence of direct deposit(s) from Port employer/contractor, or
   - Interchange ticket(s) for containers moved from the Port of Baltimore, or bill(s) of lading indicating a completed transaction at the Port in 2024.

You will have to sign a statement that says you regularly performed work at the Port of Baltimore for each week temporary relief payments are requested.

8. Do I need to fill out the Worker Support Program application by a certain date?

Yes, new applications must be submitted by June 28, 2024 at 11:59 p.m. Recertification forms and appeals requests will be accepted into July 2024.

9. How much assistance will I receive?

Eligible workers will receive $430 for each week of reduced pay so long as you meet key criteria. This is similar to the median weekly payment under Unemployment Insurance.

10. When will I receive my first payment and how many payments will I receive?

As early as the week of April 22nd, payments to approved applicants will be made in the form of a paper check by the Maryland State Treasurer's Office via the U.S. Postal Service. The return address on the mailed check will read Comptroller of Maryland.

You will have the opportunity to indicate whether you meet the requirements of the program for additional weeks of support. The Worker Support Program may be modified or terminated by the Department at any future time, depending upon funding, changes in the operating status of the Port of Baltimore, or based upon other factors.

To check the status of your payment, please visit: GAD's Online Service Center. with the link https://interactive.marylandtaxes.gov/extranet/gad/GADLogin/login.asp.

11. How does the Worker Support Program Interact with the Worker Retention Program?

Starting the week of April 23-29, you may be ineligible for Worker Support payments if the company you work for received a Worker Retention Program grant. Under the Worker Retention Program, Port companies that received grants agree to retain workers at the same hours, pay, and benefits they received prior to March 26th. ONLY individuals who are experiencing reduced pay compared to pre-March 26th levels are eligible for a Worker Support Program payment.

12. What do I need to do to continue receiving temporary relief payments?

Pending available funding, you will be able to request additional payments. You will receive an email in the weeks following your approval for temporary relief payments asking if you are still eligible. You will only receive relief payments for weeks your pay was less than your pay at the Port of Baltimore prior to the collapse of the Bridge. The total relief payment you receive will depend upon Program funding or other factors.

13. Can I work part-time and still receive temporary relief from this program?

It depends. You are eligible for temporary relief payments under this Program if your current pay is lower than it was before the Bridge collapse on March 26, 2024.

14. Can I receive both Unemployment Insurance and temporary relief through the Worker Support Program?

Yes. Port workers who are eligible for Unemployment Insurance (UI) can also apply to the Worker Support Program, as long as your UI benefits are less than your previous income from work at the Port. The temporary relief is provided in addition to UI. Worker Support Program

payments will not be administered through the UI program and will not appear in UI's online BEACON portal.

If you think you may be eligible for UI, you can apply here: https://beacon.labor.maryland.gov/beacon/claimant-page.html

15. Can I apply for relief dating back to the day of the Bridge collapse?

Yes. Workers can apply for relief payments to cover lost pay dating back to March 26, 2024. The total payment you receive, however, will depend upon eligibility, funding and other factors.

16. Can I make changes to my application after it's been submitted?

Supporting documentation that demonstrates an applicant's pay or connection to the Port can be updated. Personal information such as an applicant's Social Security Number or address in an application cannot be updated after it is submitted. An applicant will need to withdraw their application and resubmit.

17. Can payments be made via direct deposit to a bank account?

No. All payments will be made via paper check and mailed to approved applicants through the U.S. Postal Service. It's critical that workers provide their current mailing address to receive their checks.

18. Will I need to pay taxes on the temporary relief payments?

Yes. Similar to the Unemployment Insurance program, payments are subject to federal and state taxes. All temporary relief recipients will receive a 1099 tax form from the State of Maryland for 2024.

19. If I owe child support arrears or payment to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), will the amount owed be deducted from my temporary relief payments under this program?

Yes. The Worker Support Program is required by law to deduct any amount owed in child support arrears or to the IRS from temporary relief payments issued. You must make your regular monthly child support payments.

20. Can the application be viewed in any language besides English?

Yes, the application and program FAQs will be available in Spanish. These are posted in the application portal in PDF form. The application portal also offers a feature allowing the claimant to change the language for buttons, menus, static text, and dialog boxes throughout the site.

21. Can I request an accommodation?

Yes, please dial 7-1-1 to place a call through Maryland Relay, a state-provided free public service that makes telephone communication accessible. Other auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

22. What happens if my application is denied because you think I'm ineligible?

If your application for benefits is denied based on an eligibility factor, you will receive an email explaining the basis for the denial. You will also be provided information about how to appeal the denial. During an appeal, a hearing officer will review your claim. You will be able to provide evidence supporting your application.