

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Bret Crow, [Bret.Crow@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Bret.Crow@jfs.ohio.gov) or  
Angela Terez, [Angela.Terez@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Angela.Terez@jfs.ohio.gov)  
(614) 728-9656**

### **ODJFS Releases PUA Claims for Payment**

COLUMBUS, OHIO – As the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) continues an investigation about potentially fraudulent claims submitted via the federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program, it has released 1,500 claims for payment.

ODJFS placed temporary fraud alert holds on about 270,000 claims associated with specific banks and routing numbers after noticing patterns of suspicious behavior. More than 95% of the claims – representing an estimated \$200 million each week – were flagged as having multiple fraud indicators, such as deceased individuals, fraudulent IP addresses and bank routing numbers, and invalid email addresses.

In order to prevent additional fraud, ODJFS requires new claims with a suspicious routing number or other suspicious indicators to undergo a second round of identity verification, which is more comprehensive than the first round, including bank routing information. Claims processors and fraud specialists are taking extra steps to assess the legitimacy of claims associated with those banks and routing numbers. Legitimate claimants, like the less than 1% identified so far, will need to prove their identity once they receive instructions on how to verify the validity of their claims. ODJFS is working through the other claims and will release legitimate claims when they submit more information to verify they are who they say they are.

“Unfortunately, there are criminals hoping to take advantage of the COVID-19 emergency at the expense of honest Ohioans who have earned their benefits,” said ODJFS Director Kimberly Hall. “We regret that legitimate claimants have been caught up in this fraud scheme, but we are charged with maintaining program integrity so that we can preserve benefits for those who need them.”

ODJFS has reassigned 185 regular unemployment adjudicators to help process legitimate claims. The agency also has brought on an additional 60 staff to assist, with 20 more starting next week.

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*The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services manages vital programs that strengthen Ohio families. These include job training and employment services, unemployment insurance, cash and food assistance, child care, child and adult protective services, adoption, and child support services.*

