



# FY21 CUSTOMER SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT



## MISSION STATEMENT

The Maryland Department of Labor is committed to safeguarding and protecting Marylanders. We're proud to support the economic stability of the state by providing businesses, the workforce and the consuming public with high quality customer-focused regulatory, employment and training services.

## DIVISIONS

1. Division of Occupational and Professional Licenses
2. Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning
3. Division of Labor and Industry
4. Division of Unemployment Insurance
5. Office of the Commissioner of Financial Regulation
6. Governor's Workforce Development Board
7. Maryland Racing Commission

### Office of Constituent Services

Director: Summar J. Goodman - [summar.goodman@maryland.gov](mailto:summar.goodman@maryland.gov)

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## FY21 Highlights



### MORE STAFF SERVING MORE MARYLANDERS

Hiring internal staff and forming partnerships with vendors allowed the Department of Labor to increase employees within the Division of Unemployment Insurance during the pandemic.



The Department of Labor hired 100 new internal employees to work in the Division of Unemployment Insurance.

### INCREASED CALL CENTER STAFF



The Department of Labor gained 1,875 new call center employees. Thousands of calls are received by agency staff daily.

### PARTNERSHIPS ENHANCE STAFFING

The Department of Labor gained 250 new staff through a partnership with the company Alorica.



## MARYLAND'S WORKFORCE EXCHANGE (MWE)

**[mwejobs.maryland.gov](https://mwejobs.maryland.gov)**



Powerful Online  
Workforce Services System for  
Job Seekers & Employers  
24 hours a day  
7 days a week



**NEW CUSTOMERS  
REGISTERED FOR  
ONLINE JOB  
SERVICES**

**12,132**

**EMPLOYERS  
RECEIVING  
SERVICES**

**47,152**



**MWE WEB HITS**

**1,162,557**

**MOBILE APP JOB  
SEARCHES**

**14,672**

**NEW APP USERS**

**5,263**



## **MARYLAND'S LAYOFF AVERSION FUND**

**TWO ROUNDS OF FUNDING  
IN ALL 24 JURISDICTIONS  
TOTALING**

**More than \$31 million dollars**

**TOTAL  
SMALL BUSINESSES  
SUPPORTED**

**1,267**

**TOTAL  
NUMBER OF  
JOBS SAVED**

**21,555**

## FY21 Leadership Analysis

The Maryland Department of Labor will always strive to provide excellent customer service, and Governor Hogan's Customer Service Promise is the foundation for the Department's commitment to serving the citizens of Maryland.

Marylanders served by the Department include individuals in need of occupational and professional licenses, job seekers, business owners, employers, Maryland workers, unemployment claimants, financial institutions and others. The Department of Labor continues to change Maryland for the better by providing a predictable and inclusive regulatory environment for licensees through efficient and responsive processes. The agency safeguards Maryland's work environments through outreach and educational programs, by establishing partnerships and encouraging ongoing improvements in workplace safety and health. Labor fosters economic growth through collaborative, comprehensive employment and job training programs that best ensure Maryland workers have the skills that Maryland employers need to succeed and grow into the future.

The COVID-19 pandemic required staff to pivot amid procedural changes and the implementation of new programs while handling a high volume of calls, emails and website requests that were addressed as quickly as possible across our agency. In response, the agency added more staff and moved rapidly toward incorporating additional innovative, user-friendly digital solutions to provide self-service options for constituents via the website and downloadable phone applications. In FY21, the Department of Labor learned to embrace change while remaining committed to the goal of providing customer care during uncertain times.

## Recognition Given to Employees

As a part of the Department of Labor's ongoing customer service initiative, a vital component is recognition programs that highlight employee performance. The Department has created a culture that acknowledges and reinforces positive work performance. During FY21, the recognition program was an ongoing feature in the internal e-newsletter, "*Labor - We're All In!*"



*Department of Labor Secretary Tiffany P. Robinson honors women veterans*

In addition, Labor Secretary Tiffany P. Robinson held a small, in-person event to honor women veterans employed with the Department of Labor in June 2021. The Secretary presented each honoree with proclamations from the State of Maryland and thanked them for their service.



## Detailed FY21 Results



### Unemployment Insurance Benefits

- From March 2020 to June 2021, the State of Maryland paid out more than \$12.3 billion in unemployment benefits to 730,759 recipients, resolving more than 97% of claims

### COVID-19 National Dislocated Worker Grant Funds

- Maryland awarded more than \$2.8 million in COVID-19 National Dislocated Worker Grant Funds
- Funding issued to support more than 720 Marylanders with reemployment and training services from ten Local Workforce Development Areas across the state

### New Staff Hired to Address Surge in Unemployment Applications

- The department hired approximately 2,225 new unemployment insurance employees
- This includes 1,875 call center staff from the vendor Accenture
- 250 adjudicators from the vendor Alorica
- More than 100 new state staff added

### Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE) Website

- Employers receiving services: 47,152
- New customers enrolled/registered in the MWE: 12,132
- MWE Web Hits: 1,162,557
- New App Users: 5,263
- Mobile App Job Searches: 14,672

### Maryland's Growing Youth Apprenticeship Program

- Now includes twenty of the State's Local Public School Systems

## Detailed FY21 Results



### Maryland's Work Sharing Unemployment Insurance Program

- Provided a flexible reopening strategy for businesses
- Nearly 550 Work Sharing plans averted more than 6,100 layoffs

### EARN Maryland Program

- Governor Hogan announced more than \$6.5 million awarded for 33 strategic industry partnerships
- The funding provides job training to more than 2,300 Marylanders for in-demand careers including cybersecurity, healthcare and skilled trades

### Apprenticeship Programs

- Governor Hogan announced that the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council approved 27 new registered apprenticeship programs during the COVID-19 pandemic

### Foreclosure Moratorium extended through June 30

- Maryland Commissioner of Financial Regulation announced the extension of the moratorium on new residential foreclosures through June 30, 2021

### Opioid Workforce Innovation Fund

- The Opioid Workforce Innovation Fund (OWIF) provides support to local organizations as they develop innovative solutions that lead to improved employment outcomes for individuals and businesses impacted by the opioid crisis
- More than \$2.1 million has been invested into OWIF which has led to nearly 200 Marylanders being placed into employment opportunities and more than 330 individuals earning an industry-recognized certifications or credentials

## Detailed FY21 Results



### Maryland's Layoff Aversion Fund

- Maryland's COVID-19 Layoff Aversion Fund saved 21,555 jobs and supported 1,267 small businesses through two rounds of funding, totaling over \$31 million

### American Job Centers (AJCs)

- The state's 32 AJCs successfully served thousands of job seekers and businesses virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic

### Fraudulent Unemployment Claims

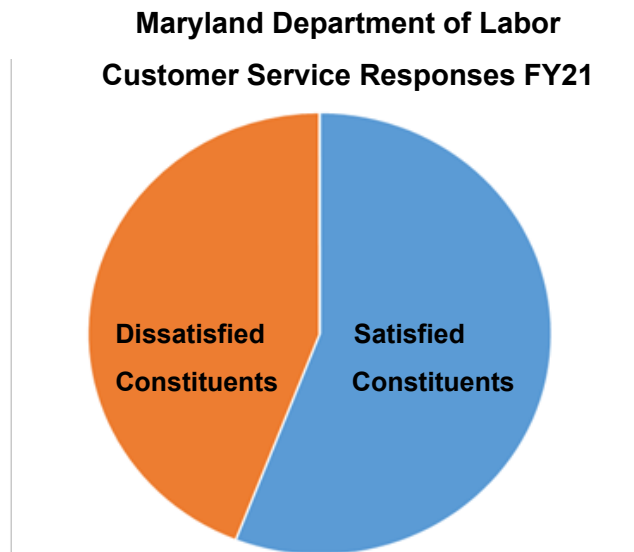
- Over 1.3 million claims investigated by the Department of Labor confirmed fraudulent
- With aggressive security measures in place, Labor continues to investigate potentially fraudulent in-state and out-of-state claims
- The State of Maryland uncovered an unemployment insurance fraud scheme targeting high-ranking state government officials, including Governor Larry Hogan, Lt. Governor Boyd K. Rutherford, Labor Secretary Tiffany Robinson, and several other members of the governor's cabinet

### Virtual Recruitment Events

- The Maryland Department of Labor's Division of Workforce Development created a series of nine virtual recruitment events to help Marylanders who have been temporarily dislocated from the hospitality industry during the COVID-19 pandemic
- These recruitments connected hundreds of unemployed Marylanders with employers looking to fill positions in various industries and locations across the state

## Customer Service Survey Results

The Maryland Department of Labor is among the state agencies that receives the most responses to customer service surveys. Out of a total of 5,792 customer service surveys received, 3,239 constituents reported a level of satisfaction with the agency overall. FY21 saw a huge influx of the Governor's Customer's Service Surveys for the Maryland Department of Labor and several constituents made comments on unemployment insurance.



## Customer Service Training

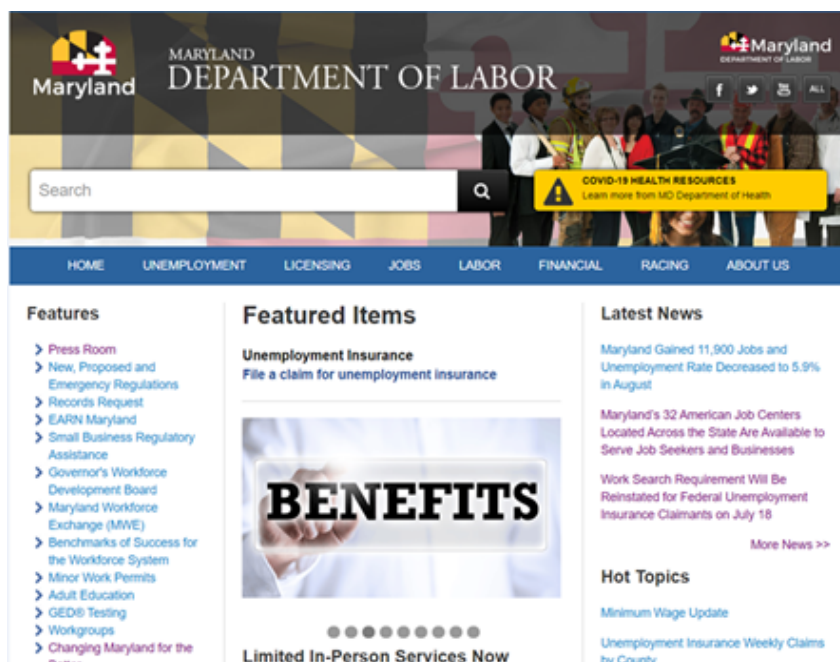
All Maryland Department of Labor employees are required to receive customer service training. Customer service training is administered by the Office of Administration. Employees learn the strategies designed to serve as the next level of professional development to better serve Marylanders. FY21 saw the emergence of more online training. The customer service training implemented at the Department has served as a model for other Maryland state agencies.

## Making Agency Services Available Online

### Website

[www.labor.maryland.gov](http://www.labor.maryland.gov)

The Department of Labor website offers online service 24 hours a day, seven days a week to ensure that constituents can access much needed services at their convenience. Online services include electronic licensing and a quick and easy option to access unemployment insurance services. Customers benefited from various services online, including the ability to file a claim for unemployment benefits or file weekly claim certifications, obtain payment information and find answers to frequently asked questions.



The Maryland Department of Labor launched the BEACON One-Stop application that allowed constituents to file claims for all types of unemployment insurance (UI) benefit programs through a single application, including the federally-enacted unemployment programs, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC). BEACON One-Stop is an application that allows claimants to file claim certifications, upload supporting documentation, and review the benefit payment history.

## Licensing

The Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing is the primary issuer of licenses for the Maryland Department of Labor. Overseeing 21 licensing boards, commissions and programs appointed by the Governor, the Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing is responsible for regulating the activities of more than 268,000 individuals and businesses across 25 professions.



At the beginning of the Covid pandemic, Governor Larry Hogan issued an Executive Order addressing the renewal dates of expiring licenses, registrations and permits. From March 12, 2020 until March 9, 2021, the Maryland Department of Labor's Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing allowed licensees to operate under an extended status without requiring them to renew their respective licenses,

registrations or permits during the governor's mandated grace period. However, per the new order, the agency implemented a phase-in period to restore expiration dates to normal intervals.

In a follow up order dated March 9, 2021, the grace period for renewing a license was changed to a final date of June 30, 2021. Due to the large volume of licenses, registrations and permits that the agency processes, the Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing implemented a gradual phase-in period at 15-day intervals. The phase-in period began on May 15, 2021 and ended on June 30, 2021. The renewal dates were established for specified licensing categories and could not be extended beyond those dates. Licensees, registrants or permit holders were able to check their status online, renew online and receive updated information via email.

## Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE)



[www.mwejobs.maryland.gov](http://www.mwejobs.maryland.gov)

The Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE) website is a powerful online job seeker/workforce services system. The MWE was designed to provide fast access to employment tools while being user-friendly to accommodate all constituents. It assists job seekers, employers, students, case managers, training providers, workforce professionals, and others.

### Some of the features to help job seekers and students within the system include:

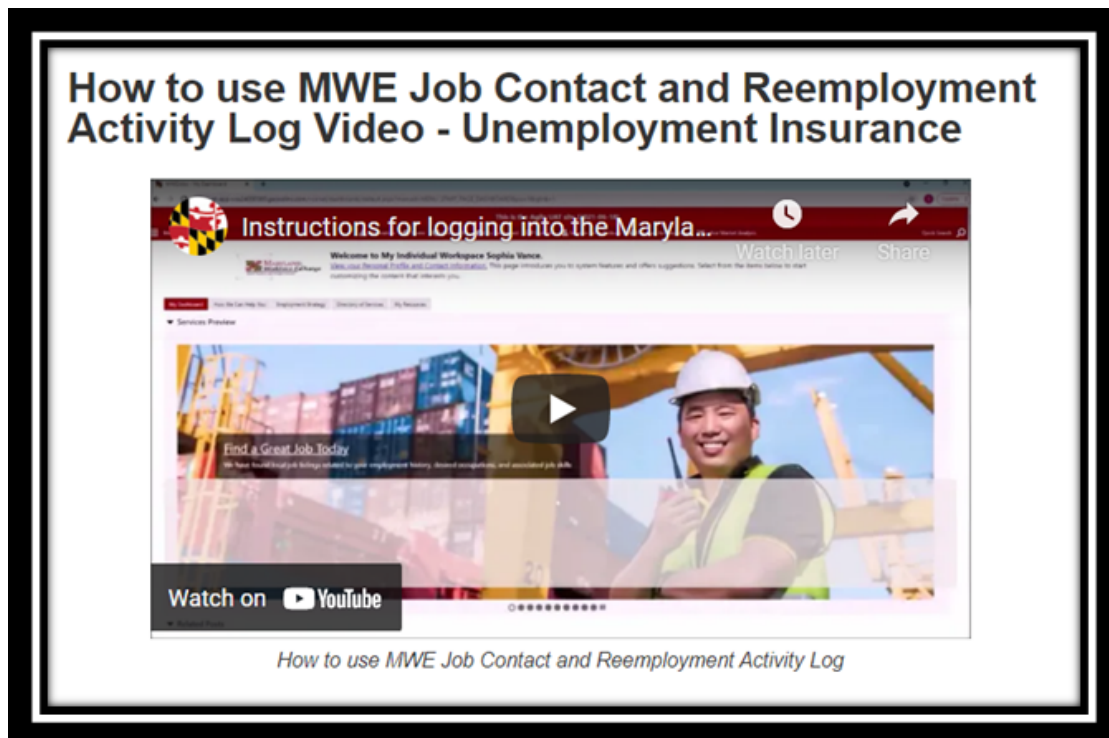
- Use a professional format to create and send résumés and cover letters to employers
- Assess your job skills, set goals, and research training providers
- Review available jobs and apply online
- Set up a Virtual Recruiter® search agent to provide notice about jobs that match skills

### Some of the features that employers find helpful include:

- Define skills and post job orders to find potential candidates
- Research labor market information on salaries and economic data
- Set up a Virtual Recruiter search agent to automatically find candidates within the system that match the job skills of the job order

## YouTube

The Department of Labor uses YouTube to post a variety of informative video tutorials created to assist constituents with learning more information on programs and services. The videos are located on the Maryland Department of Labor's YouTube page and are also located on the agency website.



## Social Media

The Department of Labor can be found on Facebook and LinkedIn and also on Twitter using the handle @MD\_Labor. The pages are used to communicate to constituents and the agency has become more accessible through its social media channels. The pages are updated frequently with information on the agency's programs, services, and upcoming virtual events. Also, social media is a vehicle to provide important updates that benefit employers, jobseekers, consumers and licensees.



## Best Practices

### Financial Relief Initiatives for Maryland's Consumers and Small Businesses During COVID-19

- In collaboration with Maryland's financial institutions, Governor Larry Hogan issued an Executive Order on April 3, 2020 announcing a series of financial relief initiatives to provide assistance to millions of consumers and small businesses facing economic hardships due to COVID-19.
- Marylanders constituents were urged to contact the Department of Labor's Office of the Commissioner of Financial Regulation for additional financial resources and guidance.

### New Staff Hired to Address Surge in Unemployment Applications

- Labor partnered with vendors to bring in additional call center staff and claim takers to provide additional support as the Division of Unemployment Insurance handled the unprecedented volume of claims and calls. Labor also reassigned more than 150 current state employees and hired 100 new unemployment insurance employees.
- These actions more than doubled the staffing at claim centers located throughout the state.
- Applications for the new unemployment insurance positions were posted online.
- The recruitment process was streamlined to ensure that new employees were hired and trained as fast as possible.

### Maryland Department of Labor Awards Nearly \$17 Million to 25 Local Adult Education Providers

- Maryland Department of Labor Secretary Tiffany Robinson announced that Labor has selected 25 adult education providers to receive \$16.8 million in combined federal and state funds.
- These organizations continue to expand access to adult education opportunities for Marylanders in the areas of adult basic and secondary education, English language acquisition, and civics education.

## **State of Maryland Uncovers Unemployment Fraud Scheme Against High Ranking Government Officials**

- Upon detection, the fraudulent claims filed using stolen identities were immediately blocked, and state and federal partners were notified.
- The Maryland Department of Labor coordinated with the Maryland State Police, U.S. Attorney's Office and the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General (DOL-OIG) to investigate and prosecute individuals who filed fraudulent unemployment insurance claims.

## **Update from Secretary Robinson Regarding the BEACON One-Stop**

- In May 2020, Secretary Tiffany P. Robinson provided an update via the website regarding federal guidance which required states to capture additional information from unemployment insurance claimants as they completed their weekly claim certification. Many Marylanders found the new required questions to be confusing, resulting in numerous claimants inactivating their eligibility for unemployment benefits.
- In response to the feedback received from claimants, the Department of Labor implemented an automated solution to reactivate these claims and prevent benefit payments from being interrupted.

## **Chat with a Department of Labor Live Agent**

- Unemployment Insurance claimants could conveniently chat online with a live agent to receive help with their unemployment insurance inquiries.
- To chat with a live agent, constituents were instructed to please select the blue "Chat with us" button at the bottom right of the Division of Unemployment Insurance's homepage and then type "speak with an agent."
- Agents are available Monday to Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Sunday from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

### **Chat with Labor's Virtual Assistant**

- Unemployment Insurance claimants could also chat with Labor's Virtual Assistant Dayne, which provides immediate answers to common inquiries or direct claimants to relevant resources about filing a new claim, extending benefits, receiving benefit payments, and more.
- The Virtual Assistant is available 24/7.
- Since May 2020, the Virtual Assistant has handled more than 18.8 million messages and 3.1 million conversations, with an average of 10,400 conversations daily.

### **New Benefit Payment Method to Prevent Delay in Unemployment Insurance Payments**

- In the Spring of 2021, Maryland's unemployment insurance claimants were offered the option to begin receiving benefits through fast, safe, and convenient direct deposit payments.

## Plans for Improvement

The staff of the Maryland Department of Labor understands the critical nature of the services provided and strives to respond to constituent inquiries quickly and accurately. The Department seeks to constantly improve its customer service delivery and meet the needs of all constituents. The Department of Labor will remain vigilant to continue reviewing processes and procedures for methods of improvement while striving to provide businesses, the workforce and the consuming public with high quality customer-focused regulatory, employment and training services whether virtually or in person.

## Conclusion

Under the leadership of Governor Larry Hogan and Secretary Tiffany P. Robinson, the Department of Labor is committed to safeguarding and protecting Marylanders. From the many licenses issued to professionals (plumbers, electricians, engineers, and others), assisting Marylanders get back to work, and the many other services provided, the Department touches the lives of Marylanders every day. The Department of Labor is proud to support the economic stability of the state by providing businesses, the workforce and the consuming public with high quality customer-focused regulatory, employment and training services and is dedicated to continuing to change Maryland for the better.



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