

Frontline Worker Pay

Gov. Walz and legislative leaders agreed in June 2021 to use federal relief funds to reward workers who were on the frontlines of the pandemic with one-time bonus payments.

After months of negotiations and stalling from Republicans who wanted to limit payments to workers in health care and long-term care settings, the Legislature finally reached an agreement that gave more money to a wide range of frontline workers. Walz signed it into law April 29, 2022.

Who is eligible?

Education Minnesota, along with other unions and organizations, fought alongside the DFL to ensure a diverse range of frontline workers who risked their health during the height of the pandemic were recognized.

Those eligible include ESPs, teachers, bus drivers, grocery store workers, factory workers, health care workers and many more. Employees in those categories are eligible for payment if:

- They worked in person for at least 120 hours between March 15, 2020, and June 30, 2021.
- They did not receive unemployment for more than 20 weeks during that period.
- For educators, their wages were no more than \$185,000 for a married taxpayer filing a joint return or \$85,000 for all other filers.

How much money will workers receive?

There is \$500 million available for compensation. Employee payments are dependent on the number of eligible workers who apply. Payments cannot exceed \$1,500, but they will be lower if there are a significant number of applicants. We estimate payments will be about \$750 per worker.

Why is there an income limit to receive the one-time payments?

Since Minnesota initially planned to use a portion of its American Rescue Plan funds to pay for the frontline worker bonuses, eligibility guidelines were aligned to federal treasury rules.

Under the U.S. Department of Treasury's Final Rules on State and Local Coronavirus Fiscal Recovery Funds, premium pay must be targeted to low-wage workers who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.


The treasury department set worker earning eligibility at or below 150 percent of the state's average annual wage for all occupations defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This set Minnesota's maximum income limit at \$85,000 for individuals and \$185,000 for married couples.

We know these payments don't go far enough and won't reach all Minnesota workers who put themselves at risk during the Peacetime Emergency. However, this funding will make a meaningful impact on our lowest-wage workers who were on the frontlines of the pandemic.

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www.educationminnesota.org

Education Minnesota is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and AFL-CIO.  2766



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How can I apply?

The application process opens June 8 and closes July 22. Individuals have to apply to the Department of Labor and Industry at frontlinepay.mn.gov.

The following information is required to complete the application.

- Name, address and phone number
- Email address
- Date of birth
- Social Security or ITIN number
- Employer(s) name, headquarters or job site address, phone number and email (email optional)
- Job title(s)
- Calendar quarters worked between March 15, 2020, and June 30, 2021
- 2020 and/or 2021 adjusted gross income on your tax filing (individually unless filed taxes jointly)
- Whether the worker provided direct COVID patient or resident care
- Weeks of unemployment benefits received March 15, 2020, to June 30, 2021, accessible at <https://www.uimn.org/applicants/getpaid/print-payment-history/index.jsp>
- Bank name, routing number, account number and account type (optional)

When will I find out if my application was approved? When will I receive my payment?

Acceptance and denial notices will be sent at the close of the application period. If an application is denied, that decision can be appealed within 15 days of the denial.

After all appeals have been addressed, payments will go out as either a direct bank deposit or a mailed debit card in early September.

All eligible applicants will receive an equal share of the available \$500 million. Payments can't exceed \$1,500, but they could be lower if there are a significant number of applicants. We estimate payments will be around \$750 per worker.

