



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 30, 2022

### **We Must Respect and Honor Frontline Worker Heroes; More is Necessary**

**South St. Paul, MN** - AFSCME Council 5 Executive Director [Julie Bleyhl](#) released the following statement after the Legislature passed Unemployment Insurance and Frontline Worker Pay legislative package:

“Governor Tim Walz, Speaker Melissa Hortman, and Senate Majority Leader Jeremy Miller reached an agreement and passed legislation to provide \$750 ‘hero pay’ checks to around 660,000 front line worker heroes who Make Minnesota Happen. However, we are disheartened the State Senate Republican majority egregiously rejected more in 'hero pay' for our frontline workers. Despite this, we are glad this agreement at least included an expanded definition of eligible frontline workers who can access this ‘hero pay’ check.

“It is clear that our near \$10 billion budget surplus was built off the backs of our frontline workers continuing to do the work that keeps our economy running and our communities safe. **These frontline worker heroes deserve more** for their critical contributions to our state and the great risk they faced going into work with an unknown and dangerous virus, including without proper PPE for months in the early stages of the pandemic. Our union will never stop fighting for all working people who work every single day to bring excellence to public services, dignity in the workplace, and opportunity and prosperity for all workers.

“At a time in which dozens of large corporations have earned billions in profit built off our labor and paid \$0 in taxes, it is a slap in the face of all working people and our frontline worker heroes that they get very little in comparison to the enormous value they bring to our economy and communities.”

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*AFSCME Council 5 is a labor union representing more than 43,000 workers across Minnesota. We advocate for excellence in services to the public, dignity in the workplace, and opportunity and prosperity for all workers.*

## Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who is eligible to receive frontline worker pay under this agreement?

- Long-term care and home care
- Health care
- Emergency responders
- Public health, social service, and regulatory service
- Courts and corrections
- Child care
- Schools, including charter schools, state schools, and higher education
- Food service, including production, processing, preparation, sale and delivery
- Retail, including sales, fulfillment, distribution, and delivery
- Temporary shelters and hotels
- Building services, including maintenance, janitorial, and security
- Public transit
- Ground and air transportation services
- Manufacturing
- Vocational rehabilitation

Q: If I am an eligible worker, what other requirements are there to receive this check?

You must have:

- Worked for at least 120 hours (in MN) between March 15, 2020 and June 30, 2021.
- Not been able to telework due to the nature of the work (at least 120 hours of non-telework would meet eligibility requirements for workers who had to perform some duties in-person) and worked in close proximity to individuals outside of their home.
- Met income requirements for either tax year 2020 or 2021:
  - Direct COVID-19 patient care responsibilities:
    - Adjusted Gross Income of \$350,000 or less for married taxpayer filing joint;
    - Adjusted Gross Income of \$175,000 or less for all other filers
  - All others (*not* with direct COVID patient care):

- Adjusted Gross Income of \$185,000 or less for married taxpayer filing a joint return;
- Adjusted Gross Income of \$85,000 or less for all other filers.
- Not received unemployment insurance benefit payments for more than 20 cumulative weeks.

Q: Will I automatically receive this benefit?

- No, you will need to apply with the Department of Labor and Industry. We will share more information as soon as it is available.

Q: Will this benefit be considered income and taxed?

- No. Taxes will NOT be withheld and you will NOT need to report this benefit as income.

Q: How much will I receive if I am eligible?

- If every anticipated eligible worker applies (667,000), then each person will receive roughly \$750. The amount may go up if fewer workers apply.

Q: How has our union worked on this legislation?

- More than one dozen members of our union testified in support of frontline worker pay and we fought for and **we will continue to fight to secure more for our frontline worker heroes.** We stood strong for \$1,500 checks (at least) for our frontline worker heroes; however, the State Senate undeniably refused to increase their proposal to this amount and, in fact, wanted to leave hundreds of thousands of frontline workers in the cold and receive \$0. **Our union will stand strong in our fight for more to honor our frontline workers because the work of these heroes is priceless.**