



NATALIE BRASWELL
Connecticut State Comptroller

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**NEW RELIEF PROGRAM AVAILABLE FOR CONNECTICUT
ESSENTIAL WORKERS IMPACTED BY COVID-19**
Application Portal Now Open

Comptroller Natalie Braswell announced on Monday the launch of a new program offering financial relief to essential workers in Connecticut who contracted COVID-19.

The Connecticut Essential Workers COVID-19 Assistance Fund, authorized by the legislature in June, was created to help ease the financial burden for essential workers who lived in Connecticut, contracted COVID-19, became ill and were unable to work, or died, between March 10, 2020 and July 20, 2021.

Eligible essential workers can apply for benefits to cover lost wages, out-of-pocket medical expenses and burial expenses. The application portal is now open.

“Frontline workers made immense sacrifices to keep our state functioning during the pandemic,” said **Comptroller Natalie Braswell**. “This relief program represents an opportunity to return the favor, offering critical financial assistance to workers who contracted COVID-19. I’m grateful for the work of those who fought to create this program, particularly Comptroller Kevin Lembo, Sen. Julie Kushner, Rep. Robyn Porter and labor leaders. I encourage every eligible worker to apply as soon as possible so we can get them the relief they deserve.”

“Essential workers are the backbone of Connecticut’s economy and the heroes of our pandemic response efforts,” said **Governor Ned Lamont**. “One of my early emergency orders strengthened their workers compensation claims, and we all worked hard to keep them safe through a safety-first and science-driven reopening plan designed with the help of partners in organized labor. But no plan is perfect, and this new, streamlined program provides financial relief to essential workers who had to miss paychecks or pay for medical care due to COVID-19. I’m grateful to Senator Kushner and Representative Porter for championing this effort, the Office of the State Comptroller for implementing it on the double, and of course all of the

health care professionals, grocery store clerks, and other essential workers who performed their vital roles during the earliest and darkest stages of this public health crisis and took the time to tell me about the difficulties they were facing.”

The program assists with:

- **Lost Wages** – Unpaid leave and lost wages if an employee was unable to work after contracting COVID-19, or due to symptoms later diagnosed as COVID-19.
- **Out-of-Pocket Medical Expenses** – For medical services related to contracting COVID-19 that were not covered by insurance.
- **Burial Expenses** – Burial/funeral expenses of \$3,000 for an eligible essential worker who died from COVID-19.

Eligible essential workers can apply for reimbursement of lost wages, out-of-pocket medical expenses, or both. Families can apply for any combination of the three benefits on behalf of a qualified essential worker who died after contracting COVID-19.

“Two years ago, with no vaccine and no knowledge of effective treatments for Covid-19, our essential workers risked their lives and the lives of their families to ensure that most of us could shelter safely at home,” said **Sen. Julie Kushner**. “We posted signs of thanks, called essential workers ‘heroes’ – I’m sure it was appreciated, but it simply wasn’t enough. I hope the word will spread across the state, apply now – no essential worker who caught the virus should have had unpaid medical bills or should have lost time from work without pay. With the Essential Worker Program, we are finally going to offer some small measure of relief – every essential worker deserves much more, but this is good start.”

"This new year is bringing with it some great news!" said **Rep. Robyn Porter**. "Today really is an awesome and long-awaited day! We've been working hard to provide our essential workers the financial assistance they deserve; especially seeing their continued sacrifices to keep this state open for business. Not for nothing, they've been on the frontline of this pandemic from day one and that is why I'm very grateful to Speaker Ritter and the offices of the Governor and State Comptroller for making sure we brought it home for our heroes. A special THANK YOU to Comptroller Lembo for his unwavering commitment in getting this over the finish line! And sure, there's always more to accomplish but a little help goes a long way, and this is certainly a great start today!"

“This program will potentially help thousands of essential workers – hospital workers, first responders, grocery store workers, bus drivers, corrections employees and many others – who contracted COVID-19 on the job through no fault of their own,” said **Ed Hawthorne, Connecticut AFL-CIO President**. “Many ended up with out-of-pocket medical expenses and lost wages. Throughout the pandemic, essential workers have been required to continue to show up to work every day and sometimes without adequate personal protective equipment. And they have. The least we can do is take care of them when they get sick.”

The Office of the State Comptroller will administer the program and has engaged Public Consulting Group (PCG) to assist with claim processing and payments.

“To make the process easy we have created a website, CTEssentialWorkerRelief.org, that provides FAQs about the program, a pre-screening questionnaire to check eligibility, and a direct link to the ‘My Account’ application portal,” said **Jim Waldinger, Manager, PCG Health**.

The website is now online, allowing workers to learn about the program, determine their eligibility and apply for benefits. Applications will be accepted starting January 3, 2022 and continue through July 20, 2022.

The program can distribute up to \$34 million on a first-come, first-served basis through June 30, 2024, or until the fund is depleted.

To learn more about the program or to apply please visit www.CTEssentialWorkerRelief.org.

About the Office of the State Comptroller

Connecticut's Office of the State Comptroller administers state employee and retiree benefits, provides accounting and financial services, develops accounting policy and exercises accounting oversight, and prepares financial reports for state, federal and municipal governments and the public. For more information, visit osc.ct.gov.

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