

PANDEMIC PAY UPDATE FOR SEBAC MEMBERS

August 8, 2022

Frontline essential state workers sacrificed their health and safety throughout COVID-19 to ensure that the critical public services our 3.6 million Connecticut residents rely on remained accessible.

While Connecticut can never fully repay frontline essential workers -- private, municipal and state --it can certainly take a step to respect these workers. Pandemic pay is that step.

State officials have allocated \$35 million for State employees and the Connecticut National Guard. SEBAC leaders have been in on-going negotiations with the State to reach an agreement on the allocation of these funds to ensure that there is a risk-based approach applied to the monies where essential state workers most at risk would receive the highest compensation.

Coalition leaders expect to either reach an agreement or enter into arbitration in the next month and look forward to updating members at that time. In the meantime, please review the Q&A provided below.

In addition to our fight for state employee pandemic pay, SEBAC has supported other efforts to compensate municipal and private sector workers for their sacrifice. Last week, the Office of the State Comptroller opened a portal for private sector frontline workers to apply for up to \$1,000 of pandemic pay from the \$30 million allocated to private sector pandemic pay during the 2022 Legislative Session. Private sector frontline essential workers have until 10/1/2022 to apply for pandemic pay, however once the \$30 million fund runs out, there will be no additional monies allocated to workers, thus creating a first-come, first-serve program.

Also, SEBAC's sustained advocacy for workers' compensation presumption helped lead to the creation of the [Connecticut Essential Worker COVID-19 Relief Fund and Premium Pay Program](#). Under this program, essential workers - including state employees - and their families impacted by COVID-19 can apply to receive lost wages, out-of-pocket medical expenses and burial costs.

It's our responsibility as a labor coalition to fight for those we directly represent at the bargaining table, along with our sisters and brothers in the private and municipal sectors. SEBAC leadership continues to advocate for pandemic hero pay on behalf of our members, and will not rest in those efforts to secure monetary recognition of our state members' sacrifices throughout COVID-19. We will keep you updated on our negotiations with the administration. Be sure to check the SEBAC website as well your own union's website for updates on pandemic pay.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Why are state workers not eligible to apply for pandemic pay through the portal released by the Office of the State Comptroller on Friday, August 5th?

State workers were not included in the \$30 million set aside for private frontline essential workers because an additional \$35 million was allocated for state and Connecticut National Guard workers. The distribution of this fund is still being negotiated between the State and SEBAC.

<p>Can I still expect to receive pandemic pay as a frontline state worker?</p>	<p>Yes, \$35 million has been set aside for frontline essential workers in state service and in the Connecticut National Guard.</p>
<p>Is there a tentative timeline for when I will receive pandemic pay?</p>	<p>SEBAC is in on-going negotiations with the State at this time and hope to have reached an agreement in the next month or will be entering into arbitration over the distribution model for this fund. Once an agreement is reached, the frontline essential state and Connecticut National Guard workers will receive their pandemic pay.</p>
<p>How will the state pandemic pay differ from what was offered to the private sector?</p>	<p>There will be two main differences between the private sector pandemic pay and the agreement the State comes to with SEBAC.</p> <p>First, the private sector pandemic pay does not account for any level of elevated risk (i.e. healthcare settings, congregated workplace, etc.), whereas SEBAC is negotiating to include a risk-based approach to the allocation of these funds. This means that those that worked in higher-risk facilities will receive a higher amount of pandemic pay as compared to workers who were able to social distance, work with others who were appropriately masked or didn't have to interact with sick individuals.</p> <p>The second difference is that the private sector pandemic pay fund is being operated as a first-come, first-serve program whereas SEBAC is working with the State to ensure that the agreed upon amounts and distribution strategy is fully funded.</p>
<p>Why has there been a delay in allocating pandemic pay to state workers?</p>	<p>SEBAC has been in negotiations with the State over pandemic pay since late 2020, but the State had to wait for the new federal Administration in DC to get congressional approval for the federal monies which occurred in early 2021 and for the US Treasury Department to release its final regulations on the distribution of the funds which occurred later that year. The state General Assembly then authorized that money as part of its budget and federal COVID relief fund allocations in the 2022 Legislative Session.</p>
<p>What if I retired in the last few months, will I still be eligible for pandemic pay?</p>	<p>At this time, the State and SEBAC are still negotiating the timeframe that the pandemic pay will cover. The Coalition's position has been that if you worked during that time period, you will be eligible for pandemic pay proportional to the time period you worked within the agreed upon time frame.</p>