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For Immediate Release

Labor & Industry and PA Justice Network to save Pennsylvania's UC Trust Fund an estimated \$12 million annually

Harrisburg – The Department of Labor & Industry, in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Justice Network (JNET), today announced a new cross-match system to identify and stop benefit payments to unemployment compensation claimants incarcerated in the state's county prisons.

Estimates by the department indicate annual savings of nearly \$12 million to the UC trust fund through a real-time benefits payment stop that occurs when UC claimants are incarcerated in 51 of the 63 counties that operate prisons. This estimate is based on the average size and number of weeks of payments.

"For many years, individuals have abused the UC trust fund by unlawfully collecting benefits while incarcerated," Labor & Industry Secretary Julia Hearthway said. "The capability to cross-match incarcerated individuals against UC claimants allows the department to stop payments rather than go to the added expense of ferreting out and trying to recoup erroneous payments made."

JNET is a secure portal used by criminal justice and public safety professionals to access data from local, state and federal agencies. When a new inmate enters a county prison that participates in JNET, the individual's information is automatically compared against the UC rolls maintained by Labor & Industry. After L&I receives and verifies the report, the individual is immediately removed from active UC benefit status, saving the UC trust fund and the commonwealth's businesses and employees millions of dollars.

Labor & Industry's Office of Integrity, established in 2011 to combat fraud, waste and abuse of government funds, including unlawful payments of UC benefits, administers the program in cooperation with the Office of Administration, which is home to JNET.

"This is just one example of how we are using technology to make government programs more effective and efficient," said Secretary of Administration Kelly Powell Logan. "We were able to bring this service online for L&I with minimal cost and effort – an investment that will produce millions of dollars in savings for years to come."

When the individual is released from prison, they may reapply for benefits and, if eligible, may begin to collect them as long as they remain eligible.

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