

DLT Department of Labor and Training
RHODE ISLAND

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



State of Rhode Island
Department of Labor and Training
2021 Annual Report

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LABOR AND TRAINING
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A MESSAGE

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Rhode Islanders:

I am excited to present the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training's 2021 Annual Report to the people of Rhode Island, our partners and colleagues in state government, elected officials, business leaders, and community stakeholders.

2021 was a year of recovery. When the economy ground to a halt due to the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020, Rhode Island experienced record unemployment, and all aspects of our agency had to quickly adapt to meet the increased demand on our programs and services. But by the end of 2021, the unemployment rate had fallen to 4.5 percent, with Rhode Island recovering 82 percent of the 108,100 jobs lost during the pandemic shutdown of 2020.

The federal unemployment programs established at the beginning of the pandemic were still in place through September 2021, including the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program for self-employed individuals and other workers who are not normally eligible for benefits, along with the \$300 additional weekly payment that applied to all unemployment insurance (UI) recipients.

Though many states chose to end these programs months ahead of their sunset date, Rhode Island took a different path. Instead of ending these programs early — which would have been damaging to families in need and take tens of millions of dollars out of the state's economy — we worked with the General Assembly to develop an innovative solution to protect family incomes while at the same time helping businesses staff up. The initiative, known as 401 Works, changed the unemployment rules so that residents could transition back to work part-time and still be eligible for a partial unemployment payment that included the \$300 boost. This allowed residents to keep more of their benefits and earn more at the same time. Thanks to 401 Works, over 12,000 unemployment recipients saw a boost in their income by returning to work part-time.

In the months leading up to the end of the federal benefit programs, we conducted an extensive outreach campaign to unemployment recipients to provide them with resources to find new employment. Our new virtual career center — backtoworkri.com — launched in March 2021, allowing Rhode Islanders to access an array of virtual services that had previously only been available in-person. Jobseekers can now schedule a one-on-one video call with a DLT job coach, search available jobs and training programs, and more. The Workforce Development Services (WDS) Division has continued to expand the programs and services that are available online, such as the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program which shifted to virtual in August 2021.

While working to connect jobseekers with employment opportunities, we also recognized that additional support was needed to help small businesses attract workers and remain competitive. In partnership with Skills for Rhode Island's Future, in November 2021 we launched Back to Business, an incentive program designed to help employers with hiring challenges. Using CARES Act funds, the Back to Business initiative provided grants to small businesses to use for new hire incentives and other recruitment activities, such as job fairs and promotional assistance. Grants were provided in a matter of weeks to over 1,500 small businesses, nearly a quarter of which were minority-owned.

To further assist the state's businesses, Governor McKee signed two executive orders that gave the Department greater flexibility when calculating the UI tax rates for 2022. Thanks to these actions, we were able to save

employers an estimated \$60 million in UI taxes – at a time when many were still struggling to recover from the pandemic.

We also continued to administer our signature industry-driven workforce development program, Real Jobs RI, as well as its pandemic-era counterpart, Back to Work RI. The state’s economic landscape changed tremendously throughout the pandemic, and thanks to federal and state investments we were able to scale up programming to meet employers’ shifting needs while providing employment opportunities for Rhode Islanders, particularly those from communities that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. By the end of 2021, over 12,800 individuals had been placed or upskilled through Real Jobs RI and 5,500 through Back to Work RI.

While addressing the needs of the moment, we also prioritized making enduring improvements to our systems. In December 2021, we began rolling out our new unemployment insurance platform called UI Online, which gives UI recipients greater insight into their claims along with a range of self-service options. We initially launched it to a small, controlled group of users to gather feedback and continue to make enhancements, and the new platform launched to the full public in early 2022.

Despite all of the challenges of 2021, Rhode Island continues to bounce back faster than we could have ever expected. I am so proud of what DLT was able to accomplish under these unprecedented circumstances, which you will find detailed throughout this report. I am honored to lead an agency whose work is helping our economy recover and ultimately, become stronger and more resilient than before.

Sincerely,



Matthew D. Weldon

Director

Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training

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LABOR

MARKET INFORMATION

The **Labor Market Information (LMI)** Division is a central resource for a wide variety of data relating to the Rhode Island economy. The LMI Division is responsible for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of information on the state's labor market. LMI in cooperation with the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) operates four federal/state survey programs which collect information from RI-based employers and households concerning their employment situations. These federal/ state programs are operated in all states making data comparable across states and over time.

The types of information available from LMI includes employment and wage data by industry, location, and size of employer; long- and short-term industry and occupational projections, industry staffing patterns, wage rates, labor force statistics and characteristics profiles of unemployment insurance claimants. LMI aims to make the latest information readily available to Rhode Island workers, businesses, economists, researchers, and the media so they can make informed inferences and decisions about the Rhode Island economy.

As the Rhode Island economy continues to recover from the effects of COVID-19, the need for reliable labor market information continues as well. The LMI Division presented a review of labor market conditions at the State Estimating Conference in May and October and at the Governor's Workforce Board's Annual Meeting in November. In addition, the division responds to essential requests from the Governor's office, other public officials, various state agencies, the media, and special researchers for information on employment, unemployment, and wages.

Rhode Island's LMI Division was asked by the BLS National Office to serve as a first wave production state utilizing the new QUEST operating system which will be used nationwide for the collection, processing and analysis of employment and wage data.

For more information and resources, please visit dlt.ri.gov/lmi.



Rhode Island Labor Market Conditions in 2021

The Rhode Island economy continued to improve in 2021 as the number of jobs in the state increased by 24,100 and the state's unemployment rate fell to 4.5 percent, its lowest level in twenty-two months. As the year ended, fewer Rhode Island residents were unemployed (-12,300), more were employed (+16,400) and the state's labor force was up by 4,100 compared to December 2020. Despite these improvements, the state is still hampered by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rhode Island experienced record-breaking employment in February 2020, with an estimated 507,800 RI-based jobs, the highest job-count on record. Several economic sectors were at all-time highs and the state's unemployment rate was hovering at a thirty-year low. However, in March 2020, the coronavirus was detected in Rhode Island, leading to total and partial shutdowns of business across all industry sectors.

During the state ordered two-month shut down, the state lost a staggering 108,100 jobs: 21.3 percent of its total employment, fourth largest percentage loss in the nation and the largest in New England.

All economic sectors reported job losses during the shutdown, with lower wage industries more severely impacted than those with higher average wages. The low wage Accommodation & Food Services (-32,400) and Retail Trade (-11,100) sectors along with the mid-wage Health Care & Social Assistance (-17,400) sector reported the greatest number of jobs losses during the shutdown, accounting for a total of 60,900 jobs or 56 percent of the total jobs lost.

In May 2020, Rhode Island began the process of reopening the state's economy. Reopening occurred in "phases" with the state moving from one phase to the next based on pre-established criteria which monitored the spread of the virus.

Between April and November 2020, the state had regained 69,700 jobs, nearly 65 percent of the jobs lost. However, as COVID-19 cases began to rise, the state instituted a "pause" which once again restricted activities for some businesses. Jobs fell by 5,500 in

December. The pause was lifted and by February 2021 all 5,500 jobs lost had been recovered.

By the end of 2021, the state had regained a total of 88,300 jobs, 81.7 percent of the total lost. Nearly 56 percent of those job gains occurred in the sectors that were most negatively impacted by the social distancing orders – Accommodations & Food Services (+28,000), Health Care & Social Assistance (+12,100) and Retail Trade (+9,100). Four economic sectors – Manufacturing, Wholesale Trade, Professional & Technical Services and Information have regained all of the jobs lost during the pandemic shutdown.

The state's unemployment rate was 4.5 percent in December, six tenths of a percentage point higher than the U.S. rate of 3.9 percent. The December 2021 unemployment rate was significantly lower than the pandemic high of 18.4 percent occurring in April 2020, but still higher than the pre-pandemic rate of 3.7 percent occurring in February 2020.

Across the country, December 2021 unemployment rates ranged from a high of 5.9 percent in New Mexico to a low of 2.3 percent in Nebraska and Utah. Rhode Island along with Ohio and Washington had the seventeenth highest unemployment rate in the nation and the third highest rate in New England. Connecticut (5.1%) had the highest unemployment rate in New England followed by Massachusetts (4.6%), Rhode Island (4.5%), Maine (4.1%), Vermont (3.1%) and New Hampshire (3.0%).

As of December 2021, jobs are still down 19,800 or 3.9 percent since February 2020's all-time employment high of 507,800. Around New England, Vermont jobs are down 5.7 percent, Massachusetts jobs are down 3.8 percent, Connecticut jobs are down 3.7 percent, New Hampshire jobs are down 2.5 percent and Maine jobs are down 1.8 percent from February 2020. Nationally, jobs are down 2.1 percent since February 2020. In all, ten states, Utah, Idaho, Montana, Arkansas, Texas, Arizona, North Carolina, Florida, Georgia and Tennessee, have more jobs in December 2021 than they did in February 2020.

INCOME SUPPORT

The **Income Support Division** provides financial assistance to Rhode Islanders who are temporarily out of work, allowing them to support themselves and their families until they can return to work. The three benefit programs within Income Support are Unemployment Insurance (UI), Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI), and Temporary Caregiver Insurance (TCI).

In 2021, the Department continued to deal with record high unemployment claims due to the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-related supplemental federal programs assisted impacted Rhode Islanders. As the claim load remained at a steady high, the state was tasked with finding new and innovative ways to detect and prevent fraud while also maintaining focus on providing timely benefits and meaningful customer service.



Federal pandemic-related unemployment programs were available through September 2021. When these programs ended, Rhode Islanders who were sick or caring for someone sick with COVID-19 were directed to file applications with the TDI or TCI programs. Coupled with the increase in COVID-19 cases due to the Omicron variant at the end of 2021, this has resulted in unprecedented claims filed for both TDI and TCI benefits. As a result, the department increased staffing and hours of work in both programs to meet the demand.

Based on lessons learned through customer and staff experience throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the UI Business and Technology teams worked with Amazon Web Services to design a claims and payment certification system which allows customers to create an individual profile, file claims, request benefit payments, and get real-time claim status updates. The feature was launched to a controlled group of customers initially in December 2021 so that the business and technology teams could closely monitor the beta group's experience and make necessary enhancements to the system as technological and customer experience issues are identified. The Department launched this product to all customers in early 2022.

Additionally, the Department has progressively enhanced fraud detection tools and increased dedicated fraud staff throughout the pandemic. Integrity continues to be a major priority in the Income Support Unit, as the Fraud team works in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor, state and federal law enforcement, other states across the country, and national workforce associations to combat impostor fraud each day.

For more information and resources, please visit dlt.ri.gov/ui and dlt.ri.gov/tdi

Unemployment Insurance

Unemployment Insurance (UI) is a federal/state insurance program financed by employers through payroll taxes. UI provides temporary income support to workers who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own and have earned enough wages within a specific base period to qualify. The maximum benefit rate payable increased in July 2021 from \$599 to \$661 per week for up to 26 weeks. Economic indicators continued to allow for additional weeks through the Extended Benefits (EB) program, and the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) program established through the CARES Act also provided claimants with additional weeks beyond the baseline of 26 weeks. All federal CARES Act programs, including Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and PEUC ended as of September 4, 2021.

The Department received 301,689 regular UI claims in 2021. Of these, 62,976 were COVID-19 related. The average weekly benefit was \$370, and the average duration was 11.3 weeks. Overall, 665,412 payments were issued, totaling \$246.3 million.

Rhode Island also received 114,705 initial Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) claims in 2021. PUA was a federal unemployment compensation program instituted by the CARES Act that provides unemployment benefits to self-employed individuals, gig economy workers, independent contractors, and others who are impacted by COVID-19 and would not normally be eligible for regular unemployment benefits.

The combined total of regular UI and PUA claims received in 2021 is 416,394 – a decrease of 176,349 from the number of initial UI claims received in 2020 (592,743).

The balance of the UI trust fund, which employers pay into through unemployment insurance taxes, was \$181,295,374.67 on January 1, 2021 and ended the year at \$214,117,201.03 on December 31, 2021.

WorkShare

When Rhode Island employers experience a temporary, non-seasonal slowdown in business, the Workshare program helps them to avoid layoffs by allowing employees to work a reduced workweek while collecting a percentage of UI.

Usage of the Workshare program decreased in 2021, though many companies continued to use the program to help address COVID-19 related slowdowns in business or partial shutdowns. In 2021, the Workshare program averted 1,248 layoffs at 154 Rhode Island companies. The Department received 1,918 initial Workshare claims and issued 66,282 payments. In comparison, in 2020 the Department received 6,140 initial claims and issued 126,695 payments, averting an estimated 2,248 layoffs.

RESEA Program

The **Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA)** program aims to help UI claimants with the highest risk of exhausting benefits return to work faster by providing reemployment services. RESEA also helps to maintain the integrity of the UI program by ensuring that claimants meet eligibility requirements and preventing improper payments. Traditionally, this had been offered through in-person assessments and job search assistance, but in August 2021, RESEA moved to a virtual platform and began servicing individuals through the Back to Work RI Virtual Career Center (VCC). The VCC allows for individuals to meet with a job coach online instead of in-person, and the prior services done in-person are now done virtually.

In 2021, RESEA received \$1,465,819 in federal grant funding from the U.S. Department of Labor in anticipation

of serving 7,000 Rhode Islanders. However, due to the ongoing pandemic, the RESEA program was only able to assist 2,235 customers. Now that Rhode Island has begun servicing individuals through the new VCC, it is expected that RESEA will serve far more individuals in 2022 than in 2021.

Federal Claims

Rhode Island administers two federal unemployment compensation programs aimed at assisting former federal employees and servicemembers. Individuals in both programs must meet the same eligibility requirements as other unemployment insurance claimants.

The **Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE)** program provides unemployment compensation benefits for federal employees who lost their employment through no fault of their own. There were 136 initial UCFE claims in 2021, with a total of \$935,526 in benefits paid.

The **Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Servicemembers (UCX)** program provides unemployment compensation benefits to individuals transitioning from military service to the civilian labor market. In 2021, there were 100 initial UCX claims, with a net payment of \$653,084.



In 2021, the Workshare program averted 1,248 layoffs at 154 Rhode Island companies.

Central Adjudication Unit

The **Central Adjudication Unit (CAU)** conducts initial interviews and research into disputed unemployment insurance claims to determine whether the claimant is eligible for benefits.

The CAU rendered 18,643 adjudication decisions in 2021. Of these decisions, 11,170 involved separation issues, meaning that the circumstances of the job termination were in question. Fifty-five percent of separation-related claims resulted in the denial of UI benefits.

Additionally, 7,473 decisions involved non-separation issues, which relate to standard qualifications or continued eligibility (such as evidence of work or availability for work). Ninety-two percent of these claims resulted in the denial of benefits.

Temporary Disability Insurance

The **Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI)** program is a state-administered insurance program designed to provide financial protection to those unable to work due to illness or injury. Unlike workers' compensation insurance, which protects against income loss caused by job-related disabilities, TDI covers disabilities that are not work-connected or are otherwise not covered by workers' compensation. Together, the two programs ensure that virtually all Rhode Island wage and salary workers will receive a weekly income while they are medically unable to work.

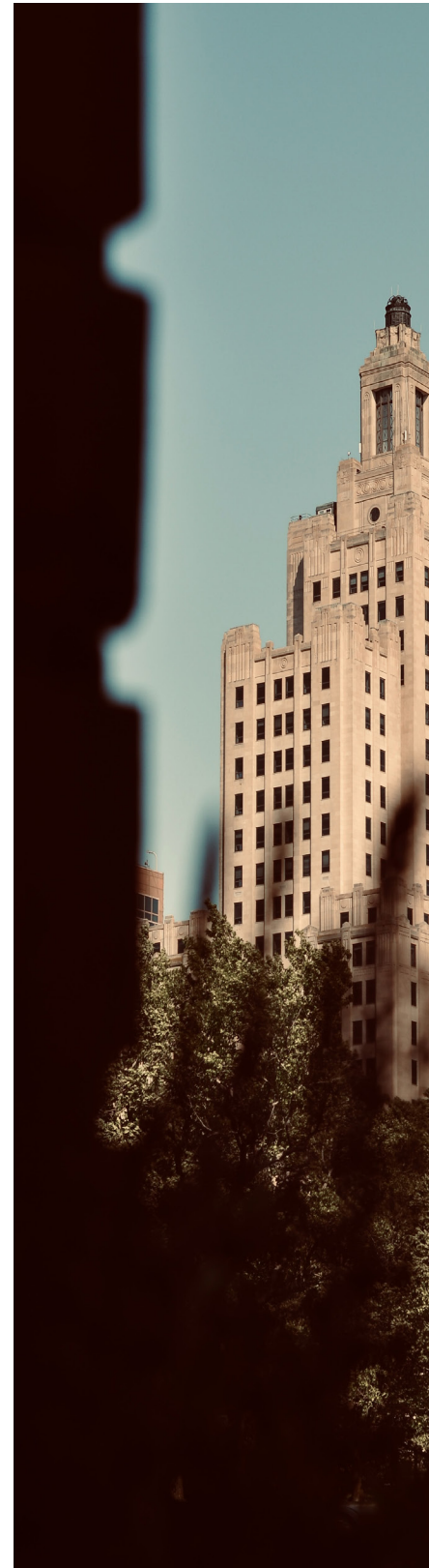
In 2021, the Department received 56,022 TDI claims, a decrease of 4,611 from 2020, and issued 362,792 payments. Payments totaled \$208,367,267, with an average weekly benefit amount of \$574 (\$40 higher than in 2020). The average claim duration was 9.6 weeks, a decrease of 0.9 percent from 2020.

The TDI program is financed entirely by workers who are protected by the program. There were 423,700 total workers paying TDI taxes in 2021. The TDI Trust Fund had an income of \$239,239,731, and expenditures totaled \$218,389,392. The year-end fund balance was \$116,404,852.

Temporary Caregiver Insurance

In 2014, Rhode Island established the **Temporary Caregiver Insurance (TCI)** program, becoming one of the first states in the country to enact paid family leave. TCI provides up to four weeks of benefits for individuals taking time out of work to bond with a new child or care for an ill family member. During the pandemic, many Rhode Islanders have used the TCI program to care for family members who were impacted by COVID-19.

Recognizing the importance of the benefits that the TCI program provides, in 2021 the Rhode Island General Assembly passed legislation extending the





number of weeks available to TCI claimants from four to five weeks in 2022 and six weeks in 2023.

The Department received 14,912 total TCI claims in 2021 and issued 25,736 payments. The total amount of payments was \$16,117,175 – up 6 percent from 2020 – with an average weekly benefit amount of \$626. The average claim duration was 3.7 weeks.

Police Officers' Relief Fund and Firefighters' Relief Fund

The **Police Officers' Relief Fund and Firefighters' Relief Fund** provide financial support to the families of deceased or permanently disabled first responders. If an active or retired police officer or firefighter dies in the line of duty or from certain health conditions, the fund remits a monthly annuity to the surviving spouse and each dependent child until they reach the age of 18. In 2021, there were 187 recipients of police officers' annuity benefits, totaling \$691,800 and there were 670 recipients of firefighters' annuity benefits, totaling \$2,477,650.

The Police Officers' and Firefighters' Relief Funds also offer tuition payment for permanently disabled firefighters as well as the dependents of deceased or permanently disabled police officers at any Rhode Island state college or university. Fifteen dependents received tuition benefits from the Police Officers' Relief Fund, as well as 30 dependents and one firefighter who received tuition benefits from the Firefighters' Relief Fund. The total tuition expenditures were \$109,877 for the Police Officers' Relief Fund and \$249,696 for the Firefighters' Relief Fund.

Fraud Unit

To preserve the integrity of the UI and TDI programs, the **UI/TDI Fraud Unit** investigates suspicious activity. The Department recovers UI and TDI overpayments obtained through fraudulent means by intercepting state and federal income tax refunds and lottery winnings, benefit payment offset, direct payment and court-ordered restitution.

The Department's Legal Division criminally prosecuted 13 UI fraud cases in 2021, with \$209,195 in restitution ordered.

Additionally, the Department launched robust fraud prevention and detection efforts to combat imposter fraud, which is when a fraudster illegally files for unemployment benefits using someone else's previously stolen information. Imposter fraud is a national issue that became widespread because of the pandemic.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

All Rhode Island employers are required to maintain workers' compensation insurance, which provides workers with protection in the event of a work-related injury or illness by covering missed wages and medical expenses. At the Department of Labor and Training, the Workers' Compensation Division monitors the state's workers' compensation system, ensuring that all required employers have insurance coverage, that appropriate documents are filed to protect injured workers and employers, that claims are paid correctly, and that measures are taken to detect and prevent fraud.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Division's Cranston office moved to a remote-first posture in mid-April 2020, with rotating socially distanced staff onsite for essential activities. This approach allowed the Division to maintain same-day response times to claimant questions and all other inquiries. In addition, the Claims Unit began accepting electronic document submissions to better accommodate claim administrators navigating their own teleworking challenges. The Division continues to regularly collaborate remotely with industry stakeholders, national standards bodies, and counterpart agencies.

For more information and resources, please visit dlt.ri.gov/wc.

Workers' Compensation Claims

The number of workplace injuries increased by 2.4 percent from 2020. In 2021, there were 5,149 reported indemnity injuries – meaning that the worker was paid weekly benefits – and 9,783 non-indemnity injuries, also referred to as “no lost time” or “medical-only” injuries because the disability did not exceed the waiting period of three days from earning full wages.

The number of COVID-related workers' compensation claims filed was 648, constituting roughly 4.3 percent of overall volume. New filings consistently tracked in frequency with the spring and fall surges of the virus. Claim demographics were concentrated in healthcare, congregate care, and other close-contact professions and industries.

Rather than submitting claims to an insurance company, certain Rhode Island employers can opt to self-insure and pay workers' compensation claims out of their own funds. The Department certified 22 self-insured employers in 2021.

Education Unit

The **Workers' Compensation Education Unit** keeps employers and employees informed about workplace safety and workers' compensation benefits and procedures. Unit representatives reach out to employers, employee groups, and medical professionals, offering employer education workshops and on-site consultations. The pandemic has hampered the Division's in-person trainings, but three medical trainings were conducted in 2021 for approximately 30 new residents.

The Education Unit has a dedicated information line to field questions regarding workers' compensation or

workforce health and safety. In 2021, the Education Unit received 4,020 telephone calls to the information line as well as 683 emails.

Fraud and Compliance Unit

The **Fraud and Compliance Unit** detects, prevents, and refers for criminal prosecution any suspected fraudulent workers' compensation activity. The unit also ensures employer and insurer compliance with workers' compensation requirements, to ensure that Rhode Island's workers are protected.

In 2021, the unit investigated 5,059 compliance cases and 15 fraud cases. The unit doubled the number of employers penalized for failure to carry workers' compensation insurance to 146, an increase of 50 percent over 2020. Of these lack of insurance violations, 77 came into compliance and were penalized in-house for a total of \$64,557.53, of which \$51,297.14 has already been collected. The unit filed 26 petitions in Workers' Compensation Court for civil prosecutions, resulting in \$19,126.42 in restitution ordered, of which \$14,861.66 has been collected.

One of the strongest tools the unit has to get employers into compliance is the Immediate Stop Work Order (SWO). In 2020, the process changed from serving a notice to attend a hearing for Lack of Insurance to an immediate shut down of the business until they come into compliance. In 2021, the unit issued 17 Immediate SWOs, of which seven employers came into compliance at service and the rest were closed temporarily pending insurance verification. The unit expects an increase in this number over the next few years.

The unit also resolved its longest standing Compliance case, Derco LLC d/b/a The Station Nightclub, and a final payment of \$60,000 was paid to the Department.

Of the 15 Fraud cases we investigated, five were referred to the Attorney General for prosecution, two of which were declined. There was also

resolution of two prior year filings that resulted in probation and suspended sentences for the defendants and approximately \$23,665.00 in restitution being ordered and paid in installments.

Since the Department is the record keeper for Workers' Compensation, it is vital that records are reflective of the entire claim. The starting point is the First Report of Injury (FROI), without which the Department's data is flawed. There is a \$250 penalty for failing to file the FROI within the statutory time frame. In 2021, 60 employers/carriers were penalized for violations regarding the FROI and \$12,750 was collected in penalties.



In addition to penalizing employers for failing to have workers' compensation insurance coverage or failing to file the FROI, the Unit also penalizes insurance carriers for failing to report active coverage, also within the statutory time frame.

In addition to penalizing employers for failing to have workers' compensation insurance coverage or failing to file the FROI, the unit also penalizes insurance carriers for failing to report active coverage, also within the statutory time frame. In 2021, 699 carrier penalties were issued, resulting in fines of \$174,750.

Another responsibility of this unit is to ensure that all workers are protected, either as employees or as independent contractors and that the necessary forms are filed. In 2021, the unit processed 4,261 independent contractor forms.

Uninsured Protection Fund

The **Rhode Island Uninsured Protection Fund (UPF)**, formerly the Uninsured Employer Fund, was established in 2007 to provide relief to individuals injured while working for employers who failed to maintain workers' compensation insurance. The UPF has been capitalized through filing fees at the Workers' Compensation Court per RI General Law §28-35-32. As of December 31, 2021, the balance in the UPF was \$888,632.71. The UPF received four applications for claims in 2021 and made payments in the amount of \$36,071.19.

Workers' Compensation Administrative Fund (WCAF)

The **Workers' Compensation Administrative Fund (WCAF)** collects a mandated assessment on premiums within the workers' compensation system. This assessment provides appropriations for the Division of Workers' Compensation, the Workers' Compensation Court, the Medical Advisory Board, and the Workers' Compensation Advisory Council.

In 2021, there were 375 requests for reimbursement from the WCAF and \$695,852.86 in total reimbursements. Some reimbursements that would normally have been received and paid in 2021 have been delayed and should be submitted and processed in 2022 due to the pandemic. Office closures, insurer staffing issues and remote working has delayed the submission of reimbursement requests.

Chief Judge Robert F. Arrigan Rehabilitation Center

Established through the Rhode Island Workers' Compensation Act, the **Chief Judge Robert F. Arrigan Rehabilitation Center** integrates treatment from medical doctors, physical and occupational therapists, psychologists, and vocational counselors to rehabilitate workers who have been injured on the job.

Injured workers must be referred by a physician or by the Workers' Compensation Court, and services are offered at no cost to patients covered by workers' compensation insurance.

The Arrigan Center was fully operational in 2021. In 2021, Arrigan Center received 942 referrals for treatment resulting in 758 patient admissions, 139 patient cancellations, 22 patient no show appointments and 23 patients unable to attend appointments due to medical issues unrelated to work injury (secondary medical issues). Of the 758 admissions, 642 patients committed to a treatment program and 116 did not. Out of the 642 patients that were in treatment, 252 successfully completed a treatment program with 168 patients returning to full-duty work, and 84 patients achieving a higher level of function but not commensurate to the full-duty level. 323 patients did not complete treatment with 134 patients as evaluation only, and 189 patients being discharged prior to the completion of their program. Sixty-two percent of patients had no prior workers' compensation injuries.

| Arrigan Center Treatment Activity 2021 | |
|---|-------------|
| Total Treatments all patients* | 1273 |
| Functional Capacity Evaluations | 48 |
| Therapeutic Treatment (All programs) | 642 |
| Evaluation Only | 134 |
| Completed Treatment | 252 |
| Did Not Complete Treatment | 189 |
| In Treatment at Time of Data Collection | 67 |
| Vocational Rehabilitation | 131 |
| Completed Program | 38 |
| Did Not Complete Program | 44 |
| In Treatment at Time of Data Collection | 49 |
| Chronic Pain Management | 83 |
| Evaluation Only | 16 |
| Completed Treatment | 36 |
| Did Not Complete Treatment | 15 |
| In Treatment at Time of Data Collection | 16 |
| <i>*Patients typically participate in several disciplines during treatment. Subsequently, the number of total treatments (1273) is higher than the total number of individuals receiving treatment (642).</i> | |

WORKFORCE REGULATION AND SAFETY

The **Workforce Regulation and Safety Division** is charged with enforcing the safety laws that protect Rhode Island’s workforce, including fair collection of wages, child labor laws, trade licensing, apprenticeship training, hazardous substance exposure, weights and measures, and prevailing wage laws. This is accomplished through licensing, inspection programs, educational programs, and labor law enforcement.

During 2021, the staff worked carefully and diligently to perform their tasks, to minimize the disruption of services to the public. This involved performing investigations, inspections, and conducting trade license examinations, all accomplished while adhering to RI Department of Health safety guidelines.

For more information and resources, please visit dlt.ri.gov/wrs.

Workplace Fraud Unit

The **Workplace Fraud Unit** enforces workplace laws and ensures that Rhode Island’s employees receive the wages they have earned. The unit investigates wage complaints involving minimum wage, payment of wages, overtime, Sunday/holiday premium pay, and vacation pay upon termination, as well as child labor, parental and family medical leave, industrial, and prevailing wage violations.

In 2021, there were 322 claims filed, 349 of which were closed in 2021, and 326 that were still in process at the time of the data collection. During 2021, 67 prevailing wage cases were filed and \$312,371 was recovered in back wages and penalties.

Professional Regulation

The **Professional Regulation Unit** is responsible for testing and licensing several technical and regulates all registered Apprenticeship Programs in Rhode Island.

Trade Licensing Section

The Trade Licensing Section licensed 30,885 technical professionals in 2021, many with multiple licenses. It also monitors and enforces trade laws pertaining to electricians, hoisting engineers, pipefitters, refrigeration technicians, sprinkler fitters, plumbers, sheet metal workers, and telecom-munications technicians.

| Trade Licensing Activity 2021 | |
|---|---------------|
| Examinations Performed | 516 |
| Licenses (issued or renewed) | 30,885 |
| Electrician | 8,075 |
| Hoisting Engineer | 9,627 |
| Pipefitter, Refrigeration Technician, Fire Protection Sprinkler Fitter, Sheet Metal Worker | 7,394 |
| Telecommunication | 1,814 |
| Plumbers and Irrigators | 2,211 |
| Burglar Alarm | 1764 |

Apprenticeship Section

The Apprenticeship Section registers, regulates, and provides technical assistance to training programs in which an apprentice receives technical instruction while employed in a full-time occupation, thereby achieving wage gains and a nationally recognized Apprenticeship Completion Certificate. The proven

success of the registered apprenticeship training model has been recognized by many industries seeking to build a skilled workforce. There were 495 program sponsors and 2313 active registered apprentices at the close of 2021. The Apprenticeship Section processed 1045 new apprentice registrations, 424 apprentice cancelations, and 410 apprenticeship completions in calendar 2021.

The Apprenticeship Section is the state registration agency fulfilling state responsibilities under the USDOL Registered Apprenticeship System. The Apprentice Section convenes the State Apprenticeship Council to review new program submissions and advise the department on Registered Apprenticeship matters. The Apprenticeship Section oversees training activities in licensed trades, such as electricians, non-licensed construction trades, such as roofers, and all other apprenticeable occupations. In 2021, 76% of Apprenticeship completions awarded were in construction trades, and 24 percent were in occupations beyond construction. The USDOL awarded RIDLT a competitive 4-year grant starting in July 2021 to continue the Apprenticeship RI partnership with a non-profit intermediary, Building Futures. This work will continue technical assistance to support sponsors and participating Rhode Island employers with program quality, diversity, equity, and inclusion.



Occupational Safety

The **Occupational Safety Unit** directs, coordinates, and enforces the safety inspections of boilers and elevators, the storage and handling of hazardous substances, and the accuracy of weights and measures within Rhode Island's business establishments. State inspections are synchronized with local government requirements to ensure that Rhode Islanders have a safe environment in which to work and live.

In 2021, the Elevator Section performed 3,506 inspections and issued 2,667 certificates of operation. One hundred thirty-one (131) permits for new installations and 222 licenses were granted. The Elevator Section also issued 3,763 violation letters.

The Boiler Section issued 7,713 Certificates of Operation and conducted 9,300 inspections. Two Hundred Eighty-Seven (287) permits were granted for new installations, and 107 commission licenses were issued.

The Right-to-Know Section registered 5,951 employers in 2021 and completed 234 inspections.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

The **Workforce Development Services (WDS) Division** is dedicated to the support and advancement of all who comprise the workforce: those who perform the work and those who hire them. The division oversees a variety of programs that guide jobseekers to suitable employment and introduce employers to qualified workers.

The global pandemic challenged WDS to rethink its approach to serving Rhode Islanders throughout 2021 and beyond. The Division implemented virtual services for all customers to assure access to the level of service WDS has historically provided. While in-person services resumed in the latter half of 2021, WDS continues to also serve both job seekers and employers virtually as a way to advance access to services and to better prepare jobseekers to meet the demands of today's digitized world. Through the Virtual Career Center platform, WDS also provides services to un/underemployed individuals via the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) program. This federal program aims to reduce the unemployment insurance duration of claimants with the objective of facilitating gainful and sustainable employment. In 2021, WDS served 2,235 participants in the RESEA program.



WDS remains a core partner in Rhode Island's American Job Centers — the local centers of the national network of American Job Center's CareerOne locations. In 2021, 1,848 jobseekers were served in total, including 1,720 unemployed individuals. Additionally, 490 employers were served.

WIOA Title 1B Programs

The **Workforce Development Services** division supports programs under Title 1B of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) by disbursing WIOA funds to Rhode Island's two Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), who, as subgrantees, provide Title 1B program services in the State of Rhode

Island. The LWDBs are responsible for the operations of the WIOA Adult, WIOA Dislocated Worker, and WIOA Youth programs under the Act.

Trade Adjustment Assistance

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) provides monetary benefits and educational assistance to workers who have lost their jobs or whose hours of work and wages have been reduced due to foreign competition including increased imports or a shift in production out of the United States. TAA services may include educational and occupational training, on-the-job training, job search and relocation allowances, income support, and other reemployment services. In 2021, there were seven TAA program participants, with five participants trained and a total training allocation of \$23,283.45.

Additionally, Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance (RTAA) provides a wage subsidy to eligible individuals 50 years of age or older who become reemployed at a lower wage than they previously earned. One individual participated in RTAA in 2021.

The TAA program is set to sunset on June 30, 2022. Without Congressional action, the program will no longer accept petitions after the June 30, 2022, sunset date.

Veterans Service Unit

The Veterans Service Unit employs a two-pronged approach: 1) directing veterans to meaningful employment through job placement services and training opportunities and 2) educating RI's employer community on the wealth of skills and experience veterans bring to the civilian workforce.

In 2021, despite the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic and economic shutdown had on veterans and employers, the Veterans Service Unit maintained its presence as a resource for Veterans serving 176 veterans in total, placing 130 in gainful employment through more than 15 community partnerships

Rapid Response Program

The **Rapid Response Program** proactively responds to layoffs and plant closings by quickly coordinating services and providing aid to companies and their affected workers, maximizing public and private resources and minimizing disruptions associated with job loss.



Rapid Response staff members provide intensive assistance to impacted employees, explaining how to apply for Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits, outlining American Job Centers (AJC) reemployment services, and reviewing available training opportunities. Other services include coordinating job fairs for impacted employees and offering customized reemployment workshops, such as resumé development and interviewing strategies.

In 2021, WDS held six virtual online Rapid Response workshops to educate employees being temporarily or permanently laid off about the services available to them. These virtual workshops continue to be provided in Spanish, ASL, and English. The Rapid Response team created digital versions of its Rapid Response Virtual PowerPoint presentation and Re-Employment Guide to offer an additional convenient alternative for dislocated workers to receive the important career services program information they need.

Second, the Rapid Response team accelerated Employer Outreach efforts to ensure a proactive, not reactive, approach in which they are able to identify an at-risk company well in advance of layoffs, obtain executive level commitment to work together, assess the needs of the company, and deliver solutions to address risk factors. Strategies included: customized hiring events for affected workers, earlier identification of grant funds and training opportunities, and marketing tactics such as employer articles and flyers, social media posts, videos, testimonials, infographics, homepage web sliders, and internal staff communications. Part of the business retention approach was to launch virtual platform to host job fairs. During 2021, a total of 95 hiring events were hosted virtually, connecting job seekers with more than 100 employers creating job opportunities throughout the state.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit

The **Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)** is a federal tax credit available to employers as an incentive to promote hiring among individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced, “significant barriers to employment” (SBE), such as people with disabilities, returning citizens, and veterans.

Rhode Island received 16,756 WOTC applications in 2021. WOTC certified 5,645 applications which provided RI employers with a potential \$23,206,200 for hiring new employees.

Foreign Labor Certification and Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers

The foreign labor certification process allows employers to bring foreign workers who are authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service to live and work in the United States temporarily through the H2A and H2B programs.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, DLT had to temporarily suspend in-person services during non-peak season. During the peak season, DLT implemented in-person and virtual services. The requirements to provide the full range of employment and training services to migrant seasonal farm workers (MSFWs) remained intact, however. Virtual outreach has included referrals to supportive services, such as food pantries, health clinics, and farmworker advocacy groups.

GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE BOARD

The **Governor's Workforce Board (GWB)** is formally established under RI General Law 42-102 as the state's primary policy-making body on workforce development matters. The GWB coordinates and oversees numerous workforce development programs through the implementation of the state's the Job Development Fund (JDF) and the federal Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The Board consists of 23 members representing business, labor, education, community, and government with the statutory responsibility and authority to plan, coordinate, fund and evaluate nearly all statewide workforce development activities.

In 2021, the Governor's Workforce Board continued to respond to the workforce challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic by maximizing investments in workforce training and reemployment programs for dislocated workers. Through partnership with the RI Reconnect program at the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner, trainees were able to access a variety of innovative and flexible support services to help ensure program completion, job entry and job retention. The GWB also increased investments in workforce training for the healthcare sector to assist with pandemic-related staffing shortages affecting public health.

For additional details on the programs within the Governor's Workforce Board, please visit the Governor's Workforce Board at gwb.ri.gov.



Back to Work Rhode Island

In July 2020, the Department of Labor and Training launched the **Back to Work RI** program. Utilizing CARES Act funds, Back to Work RI provided Rhode Islanders who were economically impacted by COVID-19 with the tools they need to succeed in the post-COVID economy. The first of its kind, both in Rhode Island and nationally, the Back to Work RI Program was the primary vehicle for delivering workforce training, reemployment, and support services to Rhode Islanders throughout 2021. Through Back to Work RI, participants were able to access an array of supportive services like childcare and transportation assistance to remove barriers to program completion, job entry and job retention. Approximately 15 percent of participants utilized support services.

As of December 31, 2021, 5,562 had been hired or upskilled through the program.

Real Jobs Rhode Island

Established in 2015, **Real Jobs RI** grows business-led partnerships that build workforce solutions to address their unique workforce challenges. Solutions can include:

- Placing new employees into immediate job openings;
- Upskilling current employees to advance skills and/or remain competitive;
- Helping business owners and entrepreneurs advance their ventures;
- Creating pipelines of talent for the future.

Real Jobs RI is a win-win because companies get the talent they need to compete globally and grow locally, and Rhode Islanders get opportunities to thrive in the economy. Currently, there are 34 Real Jobs RI partnerships.

As of December 31, 2021, Real Jobs RI had served 12,827 participants and 1,814 businesses to date.

Real Pathways Rhode Island

Real Pathways RI promotes and supports partnerships between and among nonprofits, education and training providers, community partners, and others within a specific geographic region or who focus on a similar population (such as veterans or non-English speakers). These partners collaborate and strategize how to best serve clients through comprehensive and cooperative workforce development programming that is demand-driven, linked to the larger workforce development network, and designed to maximize the opportunities for middle class employment. Currently, there are 14 Real Pathways partnerships.

As of December 31, 2021, Real Pathways placed 1,606 new hires into jobs with an average annual wage of \$35,786. Sixty-nine percent of participants had only a high school diploma/GED or less than a high school diploma.

Youth Programs

Career pathway activities allow youth to explore career options, gain career-focused technical expertise, and engage in work-based learning experiences like internships, service-learning projects, and school-based

enterprises. The Governor’s Workforce Board is wrapping up its fourth implementation year for the **Real Skills for Youth** program, having granted a total of \$2.5 million to 18 partnerships during FY 2021. Summer 2021 was the continuation of an ongoing transition period for most youth program providers responding to student need in the COVID-19 era, from running hybrid programs that combined virtual and in-person experiences to ensuring they had adequate support services to respond to the mental health needs across programs. Through the many lessons learned from the previous summer, they still delivered high-quality work-based learning experiences to youth participants and youth expressed their appreciation for the balance adults provided in terms of screen time and opportunities for youth to connect. The Summer Work-Based Learning Outcomes Survey continued to reveal youth struggles and triumphs which program providers leveraged to improve their programs.

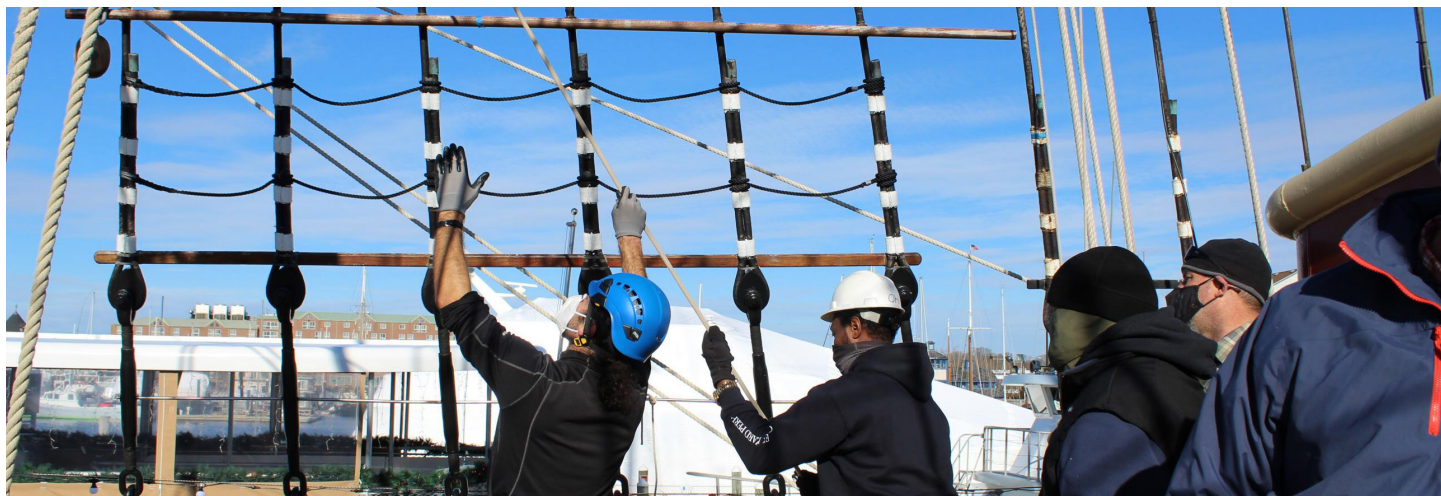
With the continued commitment from American Student Assistance in addition to GWB state funding, the **Prepare RI Summer Internship Program** wrapped up its fourth implementation year. Spearheaded by Skills for Rhode Island’s Future, the internship program delivered robust and engaging virtual internship opportunities for high school students. Over 250 youth participated in the “Innovation Challenge”, where they formed their own corporations, collaborated remotely, and developed innovative strategies to build viable solutions that address a myriad of real-world problems affecting companies and industries across Rhode Island.

Partly funded with GWB state funds and in collaboration with American Student Assistance, Prepare RI, The MetLife Foundation and the Warren Alpert Foundation, Junior Achievement was able to execute a 2-day career fair. Typically, an in-person fair focused on 8th grade student participation, the **JA Inspire Career Fair** expanded to allow for participation through 12th grade and pivoted from in-person to completely virtual, in response to COVID-19. This allowed for Junior Achievement to provide multiple curriculum options to teachers and students and different yet engaging experience for Rhode Island students. Over 2,000 students participated from over 10 schools and there were approximately 97 exhibitor booths for students to virtually visit during the experience.

Non-Trade Apprenticeships

The Non-Trade Apprenticeship Development Program provides “startup” funding to help develop new and innovative apprenticeship training models in high-growth, high-demand fields that extend beyond the traditional trades. In 2021, the Governor’s Workforce Board issued four Non-Trade Apprenticeship Development Grants to Independence Financial Partners, Parent Support Network of RI, Genesis Center and Tides Family Services.

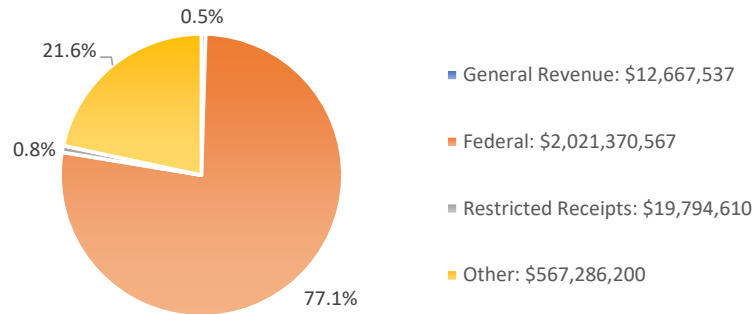
The Governor’s Workforce Board Non-Trade Apprenticeship Incentive Program provides incentive grants of \$1,000 per non-trade apprentice registered subsequent to January 1, 2016, after the completion of the required probationary period. Employers are eligible for up to \$5,000 in monetary incentive within any 12- month period. Seven organizations received grants with a total of \$16,000 awarded.



BUDGETARY EXPENDITURES

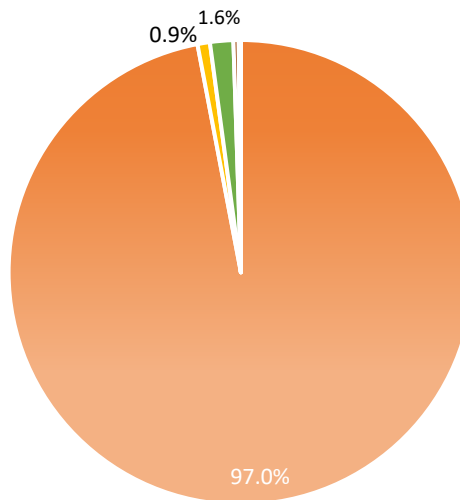
Actual Expenditures by Fund Fiscal Year 2021

Department Total: \$2,621,118,914



Actual Expenditures by Program Fiscal Year 2021

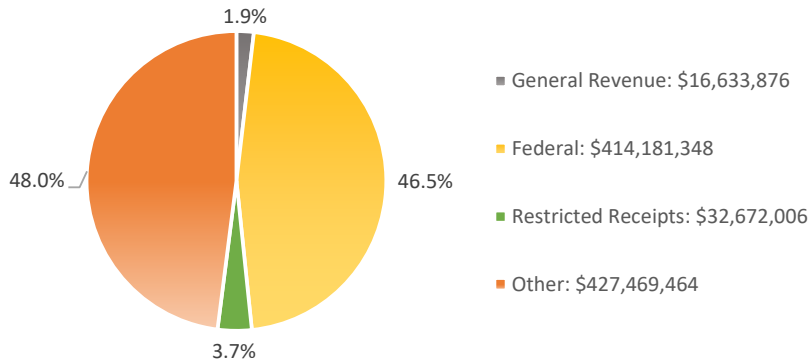
Department Total: \$2,621,118,914



- Income Support: \$2,542,555,169
- Workforce Development Services: \$22,584,199
- Governor's Workforce Board: \$42,441,979
- Injured Worker Services: \$9,524,793
- Workforce Regulation and Safety: \$3,112,607
- Cental Management: \$524,451
- Labor Relations Board: \$375,716

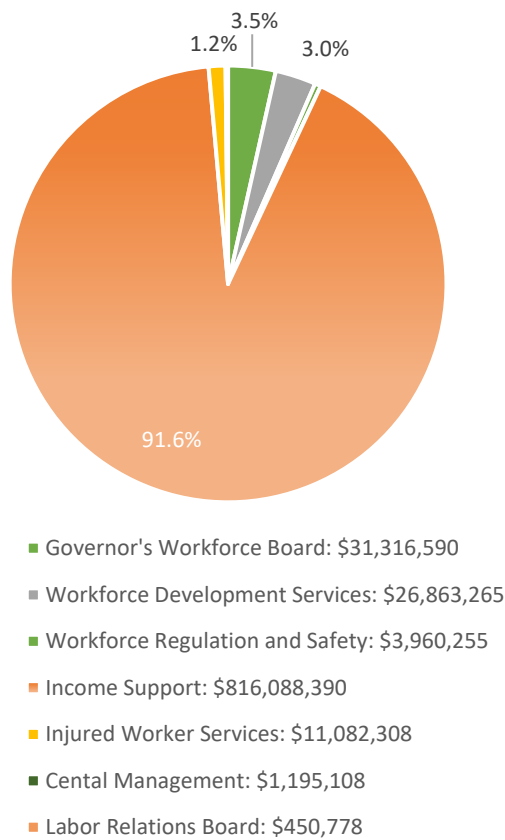
Budgeted Expenditures by Fund Fiscal Year 2022

Department Total: \$890,956,694



Budgeted Expenditures by Program Fiscal Year 2022

Department Total: \$890,956,694



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DLT

RHODE ISLAND

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