

The claimant presented documentary evidence verifying that she performed work in Massachusetts in 2019 and into 2020. Therefore, she presented sufficient evidence to verify employment within the meaning of the Continued Assistance Act, and she remained eligible for PUA benefits.

**Board of Review
19 Staniford St., 4th Floor
Boston, MA 02114
Phone: 617-626-6400
Fax: 617-727-5874**

**Paul T. Fitzgerald, Esq.
Chairman
Charlene A. Stawicki, Esq.
Member
Michael J. Albano
Member**

Issue ID: N6-H54N-DRP4

Introduction and Procedural History of this Appeal

The claimant appeals a decision by a review examiner of the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) to deny Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits. We review, pursuant to our authority under G.L. c. 151A, § 41, and reverse.

The claimant filed a claim for PUA benefits with the DUA, effective March 29, 2020, which was denied in a determination issued on May 12, 2021. The claimant appealed the determination to the DUA hearings department. Following a hearing on the merits, the review examiner affirmed the agency's initial determination and denied PUA benefits in a decision rendered on November 30, 2021. We accepted the claimant's application for review.

Benefits were denied after the review examiner determined that the claimant had failed to meet the eligibility requirements to substantiate employment, self-employment, or planned commencement of employment or self-employment, and, thus, the claimant was not eligible for PUA benefits. After considering the recorded testimony and evidence from the hearing, the review examiner's decision, and the claimant's appeal, we remanded the case to the review examiner to obtain additional evidence pertaining to the claimant's employment status in 2019. The claimant attended the remand hearing. Thereafter, the review examiner issued her consolidated findings of fact. Our decision is based upon our review of the entire record.

The issue before the Board is whether the review examiner's decision, which concluded that the claimant did not meet her burden to substantiate employment or self-employment because she failed to provide any documentation showing she worked or was going to be working in Massachusetts in 2019 or 2020, is supported by substantial and credible evidence and is free from error of law.

Findings of Fact

The review examiner's consolidated findings of fact and credibility assessment are set forth below in their entirety:

1. The claimant filed a claim for PUA benefits, with an effective date of March 29, 2020. The Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) determined that the claimant has a benefit rate of \$267 per week on the claim.
2. The claimant worked as a Certified Nursing Assistant at an assisted-living facility in [City], Massachusetts from November 1, 2019 until January 2020. The claimant began working for a delivery service in October 2020.
3. The claimant has a 2019 W-2 from the assisted-living facility showing gross wages of \$791.75.
4. On May 12, 2021, the DUA sent the claimant a Notice of Non-Monetary Issue Determination, informing her that she was not eligible to receive benefits beginning the week ending January 2, 2021.
5. The claimant appealed the DUA's determination.

[Credibility] Assessment:

This examiner finds the claimant's testimony and evidence to be credible. The claimant's testimony was consistent, persuasive, detailed, and she was forthright in her answers to the examiner's questions during the remand hearing. The claimant submitted her 2019 Form W-2 from the assisted-living facility showing her 2019 gross wages, which corroborated her testimony. This examiner credits that document as authentic and credible.

Ruling of the Board

In accordance with our statutory obligation, we review the record and the decision made by the review examiner to determine: (1) whether the consolidated findings are supported by substantial and credible evidence; and (2) whether the review examiner's original conclusion is free from error of law. Upon such review, the Board adopts the review examiner's consolidated findings of fact and deems them to be supported by substantial and credible evidence. We further believe that the review examiner's credibility assessment is reasonable in relation to the evidence presented. However, as discussed more fully below, we disagree with the review examiner's legal conclusion that the claimant failed to meet her burden to continue receiving PUA benefits.

The claimant in this case seeks PUA benefits, a new unemployment benefit program provided under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020, and administered by the U.S. Secretary of Labor.¹ Pursuant to the Continued Assistance for Unemployed Workers Act (Continued Assistance Act),² any claimant who files a new application for PUA benefits on or after January 31, 2021, or any claimant who receives a payment of PUA benefits on or after December 27, 2020, is required to provide documentation substantiating employment, self-employment, or planned commencement of employment or self-employment at

¹ Pub. L. 116-136 (Mar. 27, 2020), § 2102.

² Pub. L. 116-260 (Dec. 27, 2020), § 241.

some point between the start of the applicable tax year and the date the claimant filed for benefits. See U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Unemployment Insurance Program Letter (UIPL) 16-20, Change 4 (Jan. 8, 2021), 4(b), p. 5, and Attachment I, C(2)(b), p. I-11. There is no requirement that such documentation relate to work the claimant lost because of COVID-19.

The claimant filed for PUA benefits effective March 29, 2020. Therefore, pursuant to the applicable provisions of the Continued Assistance Act, the claimant was required to substantiate employment, self-employment or planned commencement of employment or self-employment at some time between January 1, 2019, and March 29, 2020.³

The claimant presented documentary evidence verifying that she worked as Certified Nursing Assistant at an assisted living facility from November, 2019 until January, 2020. Consolidated Findings ## 2 and 3. The documents and the claimant's testimony together are sufficient to substantiate her employment during a portion of 2019 and 2020.

We, therefore, conclude as a matter of law that the claimant met the eligibility requirement to substantiate employment or self-employment within the meaning of the Continued Assistance Act.

The review examiner's decision is reversed. The claimant is entitled to receive PUA benefits for the week beginning January 2, 2021, and for subsequent weeks if otherwise eligible.



Charlene A. Stawicki, Esq.
Member

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
DATE OF DECISION - May 24, 2022



Michael J. Albano
Member

Chairman Paul T. Fitzgerald, Esq. did not participate in this decision.

**ANY FURTHER APPEAL WOULD BE TO A MASSACHUSETTS
STATE DISTRICT COURT
(See Section 42, Chapter 151A, General Laws Enclosed)**

The last day to appeal this decision to a Massachusetts District Court is thirty days from the mail date on the first page of this decision. If that thirtieth day falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, the last day to appeal this decision is the business day next following the thirtieth day.

³ The Board acknowledges the ambiguity in the U.S. Department of Labor's interpretation of the period which one must substantiate employment or self-employment. Though the period is defined, "as some point between the applicable taxable year and the date of filing," the examples which follow show the Department's intention that the period to substantiate one's employment is between the applicable tax year and the claimant's effective date. The claimant must show a connection to the labor force before he or she became unemployed. See UIPL 16-20, Change 4, Attachment I, C(2)(b), p. I-11.

To locate the nearest Massachusetts District Court, see:
www.mass.gov/courts/court-info/courthouses

Please be advised that fees for services rendered by an attorney or agent to a claimant in connection with an appeal to the Board of Review are not payable unless submitted to the Board of Review for approval, under G.L. c. 151A, § 37.

LSW/rh