



PRESS RELEASE

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Advocates for Mainers with low incomes warn time for claiming stimulus checks from CARES Act is short

AUGUSTA – Maine Equal Justice, CA\$H Maine, and the Maine Center for Economic Policy warned today that as many as [32,000](#) Mainers could be at risk of not receiving their federal stimulus payments this year if they do not file with the IRS by the October 15th deadline.

Economic Impact Payments, commonly referred to as “stimulus checks” or “recovery rebates,” were a provision of the federal Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act legislation that Congress passed in April. The full stimulus payment of \$1,200 is available to individuals who have no income or earn less than \$75,000, or under \$150,000 if married filing taxes jointly.

Since tax filers received their checks automatically earlier this year, people who normally do not file taxes are most likely to be missing out on their payment. People who are [likely](#) to fall into this “non-filer” category include low-income families with children, people long disconnected from work opportunities, people of color, and people lacking secure housing. These individuals have been hit hardest by the pandemic.

Mainers with low income who already claimed their stimulus checks say that support has made an enormous difference. “I have been living solely on Social Security Retirement and Disability income, I can barely keep my home running,” said Joan Willoe, a retired social worker from Northport. “This leaves me virtually no money for health expenses. With the \$1,200 stimulus check, I

was able to get a new, updated prescription and new eyeglass frames in May. I had clear vision for the first time in a very long time!”

“Right now, there are potentially thousands of Mainers who haven’t received their stimulus checks but qualify for a payment. Other COVID-19 special resources like federal unemployment insurance and some types of housing assistance are expiring, so it’s even more important that no one misses out on this help,” said Ann Danforth, a policy advocate with Maine Equal Justice.

“Making sure that everyone gets their stimulus payment would reduce hardship and give state and local economies a much-needed boost,” added James Myall, a policy analyst at the Maine Center for Economic Policy. “These payments would go to low-income individuals and families at a time when need is rising due to the pandemic, and as we wait on Congress to provide more relief.”

“If you don’t usually file taxes and you haven’t gotten your \$1,200 stimulus check yet, you must go to www.irs.gov/eip to complete an online form by October 15th in order to receive your payment this year” Janet Smith of CA\$H Maine emphasized. “This is one of the biggest pools of support available to Mainers with low incomes right now.”

The IRS “Get My Payment” [tool](#) allows anyone to check when and how their payment will arrive. For questions about the status of a payment, people can call the IRS hotline at 800-919-9835. Online or phone support is also available for anyone who has more questions. United Way’s [211 EIP Helpline](#) (1-844-322-3639) provides live assistance to help people complete the form and answer questions about eligibility.

In early September, the IRS [announced](#) it was sending letters to 32,346 potential non-filers in Maine, who need to file a tax return or complete an online IRS form by October 15 to receive their stimulus payment this year. According to data released by the IRS:

- 4,752 of these letters went to recipients with zip codes in Cumberland County
- 2,596 went to recipients with zip codes in York County
- 1,854 went to Androscoggin County
- 1,526 went to Kennebec County
- 1,361 went to Penobscot County
- 560 went to Hancock County
- 287 went to Sagadahoc County
- 267 went to Somerset County
- 247 went to Knox County

- 236 went to Waldo County

These payments would go to low-income individuals and families at a time when need is rising due to the pandemic, and as we wait on Congress to provide more relief. As enhanced federal unemployment benefits ended at the end of July, applications for food assistance in the state increased by 40% in the first week of August and applications for TANF tripled. Since the beginning of August, MaineHousing has received three times the number of rental relief applications than were filed in July.

While some non-filers have already used the non-filers tool, according to a June [analysis](#) from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, there are approximately 6,900 Maine Households, including 14,900 adults and 6,900 children, who are low-income SNAP recipients who have likely been missed by the IRS' automatic payments. These payments alone total close to \$13 million – money that otherwise will not reach the individuals these payments are meant for, nor get put into the state's economy.

The IRS is automatically sending payments to people who already filed taxes for 2018 or 2019; receive Social Security, Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI); or who are a railroad retiree or Veterans Affairs (VA) beneficiary. If you fall into this category but still haven't received your payment, call the IRS hotline at 800-919-9835. According to the IRS' most recent May 22 [report](#), 714,941 Economic impact payments have been made to Mainers in the amount of \$1,215,239,330.

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