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Ohio added 9,900 jobs September

Unemployment rate stuck at 5.4%

The numbers: Seasonally adjusted data released today by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) show that Ohio employers added 9,900 jobs over the month, from an upwardly revised 5,346,000 in August to 5,355,900 in September. These figures are from a survey of employers and preliminary numbers are subject to revision. Ohio employers have added 78,100 jobs so far this year. Ohio is recovering jobs about a third as quickly as the nation, with a monthly growth rate averaged over the last six months of 0.14%, compared with 0.40% for the U.S. Ohio remains 254,000 jobs below our pre-COVID number in February 2020.

The public sector added 5,800 jobs last month, leading all other sectors, with most of those jobs (5,100) in state government. In the private sector, growth in a few industries offset losses in most. Construction companies added 3,500 jobs, while all other goods producers had losses, leaving goods producers up just 500 jobs. Service providers added 3,600 jobs, with industries evenly split between gains and losses. Retail employers added 5,700 jobs; accommodation and food services providers added 2,400. Arts and entertainment had the largest losses (-3,400), followed by administrative support (-2,900).

The household survey: According to the separate household survey, 23,000 Ohioans entered the workforce last month — either finding jobs or beginning to search for them — and 25,000 job seekers found work. Ohio's unemployment rate has remained unchanged since July at 5.4%. The nation's was 4.8% for September.

New COVID-19 cases peaked at 8,349 on September 16, around the same time the survey data were gathered, and remain at pre-vaccination February levels in October, raising concerns that workplace safety remains a key factor in Ohioans' ability to resume work.

"Policymakers who were serious about getting Ohioans back to work would implement COVID safety protocols like vaccination and mask mandates, and ensure working parents can count on a robust child care workforce. That requires public funds to make sure child care teachers are paid a living wage," said Policy Matters Ohio researcher, Michael Shields.

For Ohioans still seeking work, Congress let federal unemployment benefits expire prematurely in September, and state lawmakers are considering a bill that would delay or block federal benefits to Ohioans who lose their jobs in future crises by stripping the governor's authority to accept them. Ohio makes it harder than in all but four states to qualify, but a federal measure could change that if included in the reconciliation package. Today in Ohio a minimum wage worker who works up to 31 hours per week would never qualify for benefits. The Wyden amendment to the Build Back Better plan would require that UC systems in every state cover workers who made at least \$1,500 in the year and \$1,000 in a single quarter.

"Many of the Ohioans excluded from UC benefits under Ohio's stringent pay threshold are the very same people who lost the largest share of jobs to COVID-19," said Shields. "Congress or the Ohio legislature should pass the Wyden amendment to extend UC coverage to 591,000 Ohioans now locked out, mainly due to low pay."