



Ohio Sunset Review Committee
Agency Questionnaire

Agency Name Ohio Unemployment Compensation Review Commission

Point of Contact Juliane Barone, Executive Director

Agency's primary purpose and its various goals and objectives

The Unemployment Compensation Review Commission ("the Commission") is an independent entity established in Ohio Revised Code Section 4141.06. The Commission is made up of three commissioners appointed by the Ohio Governor, an executive team, an administrative team, and a team of attorney hearing officers who conduct fair due process hearings on appeals of tax and benefits-related unemployment insurance decisions made by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS). Appeals are filed by employers and workers. The Commission is responsible for two levels of appellate review; the hearing officer decision, or lower authority level, and the Commission decision, or higher authority review level.

The Commission fulfills the federal unemployment insurance "fair hearings" requirement of Section 303(a) of the Social Security Act. The federal law requires a reasonable opportunity for workers who's unemployment claims are denied to be heard by an impartial tribunal. With respect to benefits-related appeals, typically workers are unemployed and unrepresented, so appellate hearings are designed to be simple, speedy, and inexpensive.

The mission of the Commission is to ensure that Ohioans receive fair, impartial, and expedited hearings on unemployment matters. Our vision is to conduct business with consistency, in plain language, and to preserve the honor, dignity, and respect of all those we serve. It is our objective to carry out this vision with fairness, integrity, efficiency, and consistency.

Agency's past and anticipated workload, number of staff required to complete workload, and total number of staff

The total staff size of the Commission is currently 37 employees. This includes three commissioners appointed by the Ohio Governor, an executive team of three individuals, 21 attorney hearing officers, and 10 administrative employees.

At the height of the pandemic, the Commission employed 75 attorney hearing officers (including full-time, intermittent, and on-loan staff), as well as 27 administrative staffers (also made up of full-time, intermittent, and on-loan staff). As the Commission has returned to a normal, post-pandemic workload and eliminated the backlog, the staff size has also dramatically declined.

Our caseload in 2018 was 15,071 appeals. Our caseload in 2019 was down to 13,610 appeals. When the pandemic appellate wave reached us, our caseload increased to 24,186 appeals in 2020, 59,142 appeals in 2021, and 30,971 in 2022. In 2023, our caseload was 18,147 appeals.

In 2024, the Commission will hear approximately 20,000 cases. This number is significantly higher than our pre-pandemic average of between 13,000 and 15,000 appeals. The post-pandemic "new normal" includes a much greater number of benefit appeals involving identity verification and denials for failure to timely meet state law reemployment requirements. Since the Commission is part of the continuum of due process appeal rights that originate at ODJFS, any increases in their workload and/or direct certifications of appeals for a lower authority hearing impact the Commission's caseload, staff size, and budgetary needs.

Agency's past and anticipated budgets and its sources of funding

The Commission is federally funded (ALI 600679). Our current budget is \$6.8 million, as appropriated by the Legislature in H.B. 33. We anticipate the budget to increase slightly to \$6.9 million based on the higher post-pandemic "new normal" appellate caseloads.

Number of members of its governing board or other governing entity and their compensation, if any

Ohio Revised Code Section 4141.06 creates an unemployment compensation review commission consisting of three full-time members appointed by the governor, with the advice and consent of the senate. Terms of the office are staggered and for a six-year term.

Not more than one of the appointees to the commission shall be a person who, on account of the appointee's previous vocation, employment, or affiliations, can be classed as a representative of employers, and not more than one of the appointees to the commission shall be a person who, on account of the appointee's previous vocation, employment, or affiliations, can be classed as a representative of employees.

Not more than two of the members of the commission shall belong to the same political party. The Commissioners are currently compensated as full time members at an average of \$76,000 annually. The commission elects a chairperson and a vice-chairperson by statute.

Currently, Gregory M. Gantt is the Chairman of the Commission. He was reappointed in 2021. His term runs until February 26, 2027. Commissioner Edward Good was reappointed in 2023 and his term ends in February 2029. He was elected Vice Chairman in March of 2019. J. David Goodman was appointed Commissioner in 2019. His term expires in 2025.

Additional notes

In January of 2022, at the height of our pandemic appellate workload, the Commission had a backlog of 25,974 appeal hearings. Over the course of 2022 and 2023, we eliminated our backlog of appeals

As we eliminated our pandemic backlog of work, Ohio returned to meeting all federal Department of Labor performance standards. In March of 2024, our average case took only 25 days from the initial filing of the appeal to the issuance of the hearing officer decision.

Over the years, Ohio has been considered a model in appellate performance by the federal Department of Labor, and is often called to speak with other states about business process improvement. These successes have been achieved with a smaller staff and a smaller budget. The current success of the Commission is due in large part to the hard work, increased accountability, and business acumen of the executive leadership team, and the performance oversight of the current commissioners.