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BUSINESS

Federal workforce cuts drive surge in Maryland mass layoffs



Laid off National Institutes of Health employees and supporters rally on July 21 against cuts to the federal workforce. (Katharine Wilson/Staff)



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Jessica C. Henry opened her work computer on April 1, her second day in-person after two and a half years working for the National Institutes of Health, to an email announcing that she was laid off from her job as a digital communications specialist.

"It felt very chaotic, but also in a weird way, I was just like 'at least I know what's going to happen now', and that there was some certainty, finally," said Henry.

Henry was among more than 8,000 employees who were notified that they would lose their jobs as part of a surge in layoffs across Maryland in the first half of 2025 driven by rolling federal workforce cuts. The cuts are a part of President Donald Trump's plan to downsize the federal workforce and decrease government spending.

During that period, the number of workers affected by mass layoffs reported by the Maryland Department of Labor increased about 60% compared to the first six months of 2024. An exact comparison isn't possible year over year, because the [data that the state publishes](#) online has changed since last year.

Maryland has lost about 12,700 federal jobs since the beginning of the second Trump administration, according to a spokesperson for the state labor department, which are not fully reflected by WARN notices.

The employer with the most employees affected by mass layoff notices during the first half of this year, according to the state records, was the Department of Health and Human Services, which includes the National Institutes of Health. The DHHS layoffs occurred in Montgomery, Prince George's and Baltimore counties, along with Baltimore City. Reports show that 2,755 DHHS employees were a part of a reduction in force issued on March 31.

But Maryland's job losses go far beyond federal workers. Several organizations that typically receive federal dollars, such as the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Communication Programs, have issued layoff notices this year, in addition to plant closures from companies, that were not likely caused by the federal government.

Even without the layoffs from federal government agencies, layoffs reported to the state still impacted nearly 500 additional employees in 2025 than in the first six months of 2024.

The full scope of federal cuts and other reductions can't be determined solely through the layoff notice data, which excludes contractors and employees whose layoffs didn't need to be reported to the state, such as if the workplace is temporary like a construction site or if employees were a part of more targeted layoffs.

Two Maryland employment lawyers told The Baltimore Sun that their offices were getting more calls than normal.

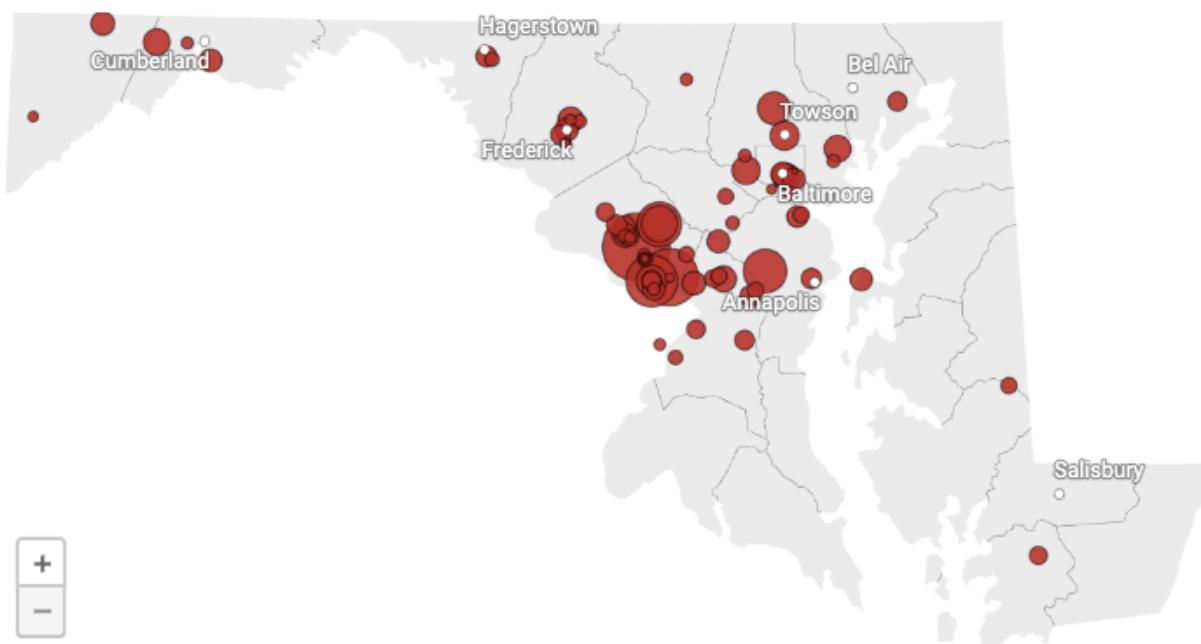
"Our phones are ringing off the hook for federal government employees and for federal contract employees," Michael Amster, an employment lawyer in Silver Spring, said. "These are attorneys that really care about what they do and care about their clients and their employees. So while we are very busy, it's not something that we're necessarily happy about."

Andrew Dansiker, an employment attorney in Cockeysville, said consultations with university, hospital, government contractor and nonprofit clients have at least doubled to half a dozen per week.

In June, Maryland experienced the largest one-month drop in federal government jobs in 30 years with 3,500 jobs lost, according to the state Department of Labor. The state's workforce decreased by 8,500 in June alone, the department said. Private sector jobs have increased by 5,200 jobs across the state in the first six months of the year, the department said.

"Job losses among federal government workers, federal contractors, and others have made this a challenging time for many Marylanders," Maryland Labor Secretary Portia Wu said in a statement to The Sun. "Although Maryland continues to have a net positive gain in private sector jobs for 2025, we know that federal government layoffs can have cascading impacts on the private sector and our larger economy."

Employers reporting large layoffs or closures in the first six months of 2025



Map: Katharine Wilson • Source: [Maryland Department of Labor](#) • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

With thousands of federal workers in Maryland and in surrounding jurisdictions looking for work, multiple laid off federal workers told The Sun that there aren't enough jobs open in their fields.

"I'm out here with a big pool of people, all fighting for the same jobs," said Karen White, who was a probationary employee of the Department of Health and Human Services after years working as a contractor for the department.

White has spent the last few months applying to jobs, taking certification courses and attending protests for federal workers.

Anna Culbertson, who was a probationary employee after starting in December, wanted to work for the National Institutes of Health for job security and, as a person with a rare disease, for the mission of her institute, the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Culbertson, along with her former colleagues, has turned to advocating for federal workers impacted by job cuts. She is a part of a group called 27 uNIHted, which she hopes will promote ventures started by former National Institutes of Health workers and help advocate for their work to continue, with the institute or elsewhere.

"It felt very important to me to stay connected ... [to] keep everybody together to support one another and help get their stories out and really talk about what we were doing, why it's important," Culbertson said.

Multiple fired National Institutes of Health employees, Culbertson said, have started small businesses as they wait for the job market to improve. Some have also put more time into their previous side-jobs, like Henry's cookie business.



Jessica C. Henry, 40, has invested more time in her cookie business, Gingersnap Jess Cookies, since she was laid off from the National Institutes of Health in April. (Courtesy of Jessica C. Henry)

Henry spent months searching for jobs after her termination, but having gotten a late start over a month after the probationary employees entered the job market, she decided to dive into her cookie business, Gingersnap Jess Cookies, that she has worked on since 2024.

"I definitely didn't plan on leaving my career to do this," Henry said. "I really, really loved it, and I loved my team that I worked with, but here I am, so we'll see."

Have a news tip? Contact Katharine Wilson at kwilson@baltsun.com.