

PRESS RELEASE

# Chicago Man Sentenced to 4.5 Years in Prison for Pandemic Unemployment Benefits Fraud and Aggravated Identity Theft

Monday, April 29, 2024

## For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Pennsylvania

PITTSBURGH, Pa. - A resident of Chicago, Illinois, has been sentenced in federal court to 54 months in prison, to be followed by three years of supervised release, and \$20,000 in restitution on his conviction of mail fraud and aggravated identity theft, United States Attorney Eric G. Olshan announced today.

United States District Judge William S. Stickman IV imposed the sentence on Christian Matthews, 35.

According to information presented to the Court, Matthews fraudulently obtained personal identifying information belonging to other people and used it to file claims for pandemic-related unemployment benefits. The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program was created to provide economic support to certain individuals unemployed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Matthews used online marketplaces to purchase identifying information, including Social Security numbers, that had been stolen from victims. He then created fictitious businesses and used them to obtain mailing addresses from companies that rent shared office space. Finally, he used the stolen identity information to file fraudulent claims for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance benefits in states including Arizona, Nevada, and Pennsylvania, and had the resulting benefit cards sent via U.S. Mail to multiple business locations, including an office building in Pittsburgh, where Matthews would retrieve and use the benefits.

Assistant United States Attorney Jeffrey R. Bengel prosecuted this case on behalf of the government.

United States Attorney Olshan commended the United States Department of Labor Office of the Inspector General, United States Department of Homeland Security Investigations, United States Postal Inspection Service, and Findlay Township Police Department for the investigation leading to the successful prosecution of Matthews.

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