

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Rhode Island

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, November 9, 2022

Providence Man Sentenced for Fraudulently Applying for COVID Unemployment Benefits

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – A Providence man who filed a fraudulent application for unemployment benefits under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program, and received more than \$7,000 in ill-gotten payments, was sentenced on Tuesday to thirty days of incarceration to be followed by three months home confinement, announced United States Attorney Zachary A. Cunha and Rhode Island Attorney General Peter F. Neronha.

Deeshawn Gadson, 32, pled guilty in January to a charge of wire fraud.

In April 2020, Gadson, who lived and worked in Rhode Island, submitted online applications to the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (RIDLT) for benefits that had been made available by the CARES Act. In May 2020, Gadson began receiving benefits from RIDLT. He received approximately \$20,302 in unemployment benefits.

Shortly after he began receiving these benefit payments from the RIDLT, Gadson submitted a fraudulent online application to the Arizona State Department of Economic Security, falsely stating that he lived and worked in Arizona. As a result, Gadson was paid \$7,170 in PAU program benefits that he was not legally entitled to receive.

Gadson was sentenced today by U.S. District Court Judge William E. Smith to thirty days of incarceration to be followed by three years of federal supervised release, with the first three months to be served in home confinement with electronic monitoring. Gadson was also ordered to pay \$7,170 in restitution to the Arizona State Department of Economic Safety.

This case, as well as other instances of criminal activity related to fraudulent applications for pandemic-related unemployment insurance benefits are being investigated jointly by the FBI, Rhode Island State Police, and the U.S. Department of Labor – Office of Inspector General. Cases are jointly reviewed, charged, and prosecuted by a team of prosecutors that include Assistant U.S. Attorneys Denise M. Barton, Stacey P. Veroni, and G. Michael Seaman, and Rhode Island Assistant Attorney General John M. Moreira, chief of the Rhode Island Attorney General's Public Integrity Unit.

Rhode Islanders who believe their personal identification has been stolen and used to fraudulently obtain unemployment benefits are urged to contact the Rhode Island State Police at financialcrimes@risp.gov or the FBI Providence office at (401) 272-8310.

On May 17, 2021, the United States Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with agencies across government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The Task Force bolsters efforts to investigate and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programs to prevent fraud by, among

other methods, augmenting and incorporating existing coordination mechanisms, identifying resources and techniques to uncover fraudulent actors and their schemes, and sharing and harnessing information and insights gained from prior enforcement efforts. For more information on the Department's response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>.

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID- 19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

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