

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Massachusetts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, June 24, 2022

Springfield Woman Sentenced for Pandemic Unemployment Fraud Scheme

Defendant submitted 25 fraudulent PUA claims on behalf of others

BOSTON – A Springfield woman was sentenced yesterday for her involvement in a scheme to fraudulently obtain COVID-19-related unemployment assistance.

Audri Ford-Victory, 61, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Mark G. Mastroianni to three years of probation, with six months to be served in home confinement. On Jan. 31, 2022, Ford-Victory pleaded guilty to one count of wire fraud conspiracy.

In March 2020, in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). The CARES Act created a temporary federal unemployment insurance program called Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), which in Massachusetts is administered by the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA). This program provides unemployment insurance benefits for individuals who are not eligible for other types of unemployment benefits.

Ford-Victory submitted 25 PUA claims in Massachusetts on behalf of individuals living outside of Massachusetts. As a result, Massachusetts DUA issued \$215,246 in payments to individuals not entitled to PUA benefits. Ford-Victory received kickback payments in exchange for submitting the fraudulent claims.

United States Attorney Rachael S. Rollins; Andrew Murphy, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Secret Service, Boston Field Office; and Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations – Labor Racketeering and Fraud, New York Regional Office made the announcement. The Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance provided assistance in the investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Christopher J. Markham of Rollins' Securities, Financial & Cyber Fraud Unit and Neil L. Desroches of Rollins' Springfield Branch Office prosecuted the case.

On May 17, 2021, the 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>.

Topic(s):

Coronavirus
Financial Fraud

Component(s):

[USAO - Massachusetts](#)

Updated June 24, 2022