

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Massachusetts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, May 12, 2022

Stoneham Woman Sentenced for Identity Theft and Unemployment Fraud Related to COVID-19 Pandemic

BOSTON – A Stoneham woman was sentenced today in connection with her involvement in a scheme to fraudulently obtain COVID-19-related unemployment assistance using stolen identities.

Lilly Nguyen, 25, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Denise J. Casper to two years in prison and 18 months of supervised release. Nguyen was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$526,423. On Aug. 3, 2021, Nguyen pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud and aggravated identity theft.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) created a temporary federal unemployment insurance program called Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). The program is administered by the Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance and provides unemployment insurance benefits for individuals who are not eligible for other types of unemployment benefits (e.g., the self-employed, independent contractors, or gig economy workers).

Nguyen participated in a scheme with co-conspirator Daniel Maleus to submit fraudulent PUA claims using the stolen personally identifiable information of others. The claims submitted by Nguyen and Maleus resulted in \$526,423 in payments between April 2020 and April 2021.

In November 2021, Maleus pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, five counts of wire fraud and one count of aggravated identity theft. He was sentenced on April 12, 2022, by U.S. Senior District Court Judge Rya W. Zobel, to three years in prison and three years of supervised release. Maleus was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$526,423.

United States Attorney Rachael S. Rollins; Joseph R. Bonavolonta, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Division; and Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations, Labor Racketeering and Fraud made the announcement. Special assistance was provided by the Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance. Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Markham of Rollins' Securities, Financial & Cyber Fraud Unit 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](#)

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