

## PRESS RELEASE

# Fraudster Who Submitted Over \$365,000 in Fake COVID Unemployment Benefits Applications Pleads Guilty

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**For Immediate Release**

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WILMINGTON, N.C. – A Pitt County woman pleaded guilty to defrauding the North Carolina Department of Commerce, Division of Employment Security (NCDES) by submitting false pandemic unemployment benefits (UI) applications intended for more than \$365,000 in federal benefits. Yolanda Baker, age 51, faces up to ten years in prison, and a \$250,000 fine when a federal judge sentences her later this year. She will also be ordered to repay a forfeiture money judgment of \$368,022.00.

"This kind of fraud steals resources from North Carolinian citizens who needed real help during a national emergency," said U.S. Attorney Ellis Boyle. "Our office will continue holding accountable those who used the pandemic as an opportunity for personal gain. We will protect taxpayer dollars and ensure that criminals who exploit public programs face serious consequences."

According to court documents and other information presented in court, from in or about May 2020 to June 2021, Baker carried out a scheme to defraud NCDES UI program by submitting sixty-five fraudulent UI applications. She falsely represented the employment status of the listed applicants and provided fraudulent supporting documents. After the applications were approved, the funds were deposited into accounts Baker controlled.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Ethan Ontjes is prosecuting the case, and the United States Department of Labor Office of the Inspector General is investigating the case.

Related court documents and information can be found on the website of the [U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina](#) or on [PACER](#) by searching for Case No. 4:25-CR-31-M.

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