

PRESS RELEASE

Passaic County Lawyer Sentenced To 21 Months for Fraudulently Obtaining More Than \$300,000 in Covid-19 Relief Funds

Monday, June 9, 2025

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of New Jersey

CAMDEN, N.J. – A Passaic County, New Jersey attorney was sentenced to 21 months in prison for fraudulently obtaining more than \$300,000 in COVID-19 relief benefits, U.S. Attorney Alina Habba announced.

Morton Chirnomas, 62, of Clifton, New Jersey previously pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Christine P. O'Hearn to an Information charging him with wire fraud. Judge O'Hearn imposed the sentence in Camden federal Court. Chirnomas was also ordered to serve three years' supervised release.

According to documents filed in the case and statements made in court:

From May 2020 to September 2020, Chirnomas fraudulently obtained a \$150,000 loan through the COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loans program. He also falsely obtained \$200,000 in unemployment insurance benefits using the names and identities of other people without their authorization.

U.S. Attorney Habba credited postal inspectors with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service in Newark, under the direction of Inspector in Charge Christopher A. Nielsen, Philadelphia Division; special agents of the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, Northeast Region, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Jonathan Mellone; and special agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge Terence G. Reilly, with the investigation leading to the sentencing.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew Kogan of the U.S. Attorney's Office Cybercrime Unit in Newark.

The District of New Jersey COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Strike Force is one of five strike forces established throughout the United States by the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate and prosecute COVID-19 fraud. The strike forces focus on large-scale, multi-state pandemic relief fraud perpetrated by criminal organizations and transnational actors. The strike forces are interagency law enforcement efforts, using prosecutor-led and data analyst-driven teams designed to identify and bring to justice those who stole pandemic relief funds.

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 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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Defense counsel: Saverio A. Viggiano, Newark, New Jersey

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Topic

FINANCIAL FRAUD

Component

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