

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
District of Rhode Island

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, March 15, 2023

Providence Man Sentenced for Fraud, Theft of Government Funds, and Identity Theft Committed While on Federal Supervised Release for Sex Trafficking

Mackenzey Scott, 26, began filing fraudulent applications for pandemic-related benefits on March 28, 2020, one day after the CARES Act, passed by Congress to provide economic assistance programs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, became law. Scott's fraudulent activity was discovered in February 2021 by a United States Probation Officer, during an investigation into alleged violations of the terms of Scott's federal supervised release related to his earlier conviction for sex trafficking.

Scott used his own name and the names of others to carry out the scheme in an attempt to collect COVID-related, federally-funded unemployment benefits from state agencies in ten states: North Dakota, Massachusetts, Arizona, Nevada, Kentucky, Texas, Hawaii, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Indiana. In each of the applications he filed, Scott made false statements about employment and/or his residence.

Scott pleaded guilty on December 21, 2022, to conspiracy to commit wire fraud, seven counts of wire fraud, theft of government money, and four counts of aggravated identity theft. He was sentenced on Tuesday by U.S. District Court Chief Judge John J. McConnell, Jr., to 30 months of incarceration to be followed by 3 years of federal supervised release. Scott was ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$16,336.

These matters and other cases of alleged criminal activity related to fraudulent applications for unemployment insurance benefits due to the pandemic are being investigated jointly by the FBI and Rhode Island State Police, with the assistance of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General. Cases are jointly reviewed, charged, and prosecuted by a team of prosecutors to include Assistant U.S. Attorneys Stacey A. Erickson, Denise M. Barton, G. Michael Seaman, and Rhode Island Assistant Attorney General John M. Moreira, chief of the Rhode Island Attorney General's Public Integrity Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorney Lee H. Vilker represented the government at today's sentencing hearing.

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 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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Topic(s):

Coronavirus
Financial Fraud

Component(s):

[USAO - Rhode Island](#)

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Press Release Number:

23-31

Updated March 16, 2023