

**PRESS RELEASE**

# **Sacramento Woman Sentenced to 4 Years in Prison for Benefit Fraud Scheme During Pandemic**

Thursday, August 7, 2025

**For Immediate Release**

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of California

Tabitha Leigh Markle, 53, of Sacramento, was sentenced today to four years and two months in prison for mail fraud and aggravated identity theft in a scheme to defraud the unemployment insurance benefit program during the COVID-19 pandemic, Acting U.S. Attorney Kimberly A. Sanchez announced.

"Today's sentencing highlights the U.S. Attorney's Office's continuing efforts to actively prosecute fraud against the unemployment insurance program that served as a lifeline for millions during the pandemic," said U.S. Attorney Sanchez. "We are committed to ensuring unemployment benefits go to the unemployed who need the assistance, not to thieves who believe they are above the law."

"Tabitha Markle unlawfully obtained over \$2.5 million in COVID-19 pandemic-related unemployment insurance benefits by using the personal identifying information of other people, including several inmates in California state prisons, to file fraudulent claims. She falsified employment records to make it appear that the claimants were eligible for benefits when, in fact, they were not. Many of these individuals were unwitting participants in her scheme. The illegally obtained unemployment insurance funds, which Markle used for personal gain, were intended to support American workers facing economic hardship during an unprecedented public health crisis," said Quentin Heiden, Special Agent-in-Charge, Western Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

According to court documents, between April 2020 and January 2021, Markle defrauded the California Employment Development Department (EDD) and the United States out of unemployment insurance benefits. Markle collected personally identifiable information (PII) including names, dates of birth, Social Security numbers and other information, and submitted fraudulent applications for unemployment insurance (UI)

benefits to EDD. Markle and her associates caused the UI debit cards to be mailed to addresses she listed in the fraudulent applications. They used the cards that were issued in the names of the supposed beneficiaries to withdraw cash from ATMs throughout California. Markle and her associates often appeared in ATM surveillance photos taking out large amounts of cash from the cards. Markle and her criminal associates obtained approximately \$2,599,038 from the fraud.

Markle also used the means of identification of various victims, including one victim, who was a resident of Oakland. Without the victim's knowledge or permission, Markle filed a false unemployment insurance application with California EDD using the victim's true name and other identifying information, but using a false email address, phone number and mailing address. Markle's associates withdrew thousands of dollars of unemployment insurance benefits from the card issued to the victim.

This case was the product of an investigation by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Office of Inspector General, California EDD – Investigation Division, and the United States Department of Labor Office of Inspector General. Assistant U.S. Attorney Dhruv Sharma prosecuted the case.

This effort is part of a California COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Strike Force operation, one of five interagency COVID-19 fraud strike force teams established by the U.S. Department of Justice. The California Strike Force combines law enforcement and prosecutorial resources in the Eastern and Central Districts of California and focuses on large-scale, multistate pandemic relief fraud perpetrated by criminal organizations and transnational actors. The strike forces use prosecutor-led and data analyst-driven teams to identify and bring to justice those who stole pandemic relief funds.

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