

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Massachusetts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, November 2, 2021

Stoneham Man Pleads Guilty to Identity Theft and Fraud Related to COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Assistance

BOSTON – A Stoneham man pleaded guilty today to his involvement in a fraudulent scheme to obtain COVID-19-related unemployment assistance using stolen personal information.

Daniel Maleus, 33, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, five counts of wire fraud and one count of aggravated identity theft. U.S. Senior District Court Judge Rya W. Zobel scheduled sentencing for Feb. 15, 2022. Maleus was indicted on July 22, 2021.

In March 2020, in response to the global coronavirus pandemic, Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), which among other things, created a temporary federal unemployment insurance program called Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). The PUA program, which in Massachusetts is administered by the Department of Unemployment Assistance, provided unemployment insurance benefits for individuals who were not eligible for other types of unemployment benefits. Maleus filed and conspired with others to file fraudulent PUA claims using the stolen personal information of others as well as email accounts Maleus and others created in the names of their victims. Maleus and his co-conspirators obtained more than \$250,000 in payments on fraudulent unemployment claims submitted between April 2020 and April 2021.

The charges of wire fraud and conspiracy to commit wire fraud each provide for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000 or twice the gross gain or loss, whichever is greater. The charge of aggravated identity theft provides for a mandatory sentence of two years in prison to be served consecutively to any other sentence imposed. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

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

Financial Fraud

Identity Theft

Component(s):

[USAO - Massachusetts](#)

Updated November 2, 2021