

PRESS RELEASE

Brooklyn Man Sentenced to 60 Months in Prison for \$1.75 Million Covid-19 Unemployment Fraud

Wednesday, May 21, 2025

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of New York

Defendant and Co-Conspirators Stole and Misused Identities of More Than 250 Victims

Earlier today, in federal court in Brooklyn, Bryan Abraham was sentenced by United States District Judge William F. Kuntz, II to 60 months in prison for aggravated identity theft and conspiring to commit access device fraud. Judge Kuntz also ordered Abraham to forfeit \$579,862 and to pay restitution in that same amount. Abraham pleaded guilty in January 2023.

Joseph Nocella, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, and Edward Gallashaw, Acting Inspector in Charge, United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), announced the sentence.

"Today's sentence is a reminder that there is no free pass for fraudsters like the defendant who shamefully stole public funds intended to alleviate the suffering of New Yorkers during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic," stated United States Attorney Nocella. "My Office will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to unravel these criminal schemes and hold the perpetrators accountable for their greed."

Mr. Nocella expressed his appreciation to the New York City Police Department and the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Inspector General, for their assistance on the case.

"Postal Inspectors have worked aggressively to investigate all types of pandemic related frauds occurring via the U.S. Mail," said Ed Gallashaw, Acting Inspector in Charge, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, New York Division. "These individuals unfortunately thought

they could exploit government unemployment benefits and get away with it and will now rightly serve the consequence for their actions."

As set forth in court filings, between June 2020 and April 2021, Abraham and his co-conspirators capitalized on the relaxed requirements for claiming unemployment benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic to defraud the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) out of more than \$1.75 million in unemployment benefits in the names of approximately 250 victims. Abraham was personally responsible for fraudulent claims in the names of at least 78 victims, for which benefits in excess of \$579,862 were paid.

To execute the scheme, Abraham and his co-conspirators purchased personal identifying information (PII) of victims through end-to-end encrypted applications like Telegram, and then used the victims' PII to make fraudulent claims for unemployment benefits. Funds from the fraudulent claims were deposited into bank accounts they controlled or were provided via reloadable KeyBank debit cards, which they had mailed to addresses they could access. The defendant and his co-conspirators regularly traveled to ATMs together to withdraw thousands of dollars from the KeyBank cards. They flaunted their ill-gotten gains on social media—posing with stacks of cash, designer clothing, jewelry, and luxury cars. They communicated on Telegram concerning the logistics of the scheme, including where to purchase victim PII, the logistics of withdrawing fraudulent funds, and the luxury items and trips they were purchasing with their fraudulently obtained wealth.

Abraham was charged in the case alongside co-defendants Armani Miller, Seth Golding, Gianni Stewart, Andrew Ruddock, Angel Cabrera and Carlos Vazquez. Miller and Golding were both sentenced to 57 months' imprisonment for conspiring to commit access device fraud, and Stewart was sentenced to 24 months' imprisonment for conspiring to commit access device fraud. Ruddock was sentenced to probation for operating an unlicensed money transmitting business, and specifically for selling cryptocurrency to his co-conspirators. Cabrera pleaded guilty to conspiring to commit access device fraud and awaits sentencing. Vazquez pleaded guilty to aggravated identity theft and conspiring to commit access device fraud and also awaits sentencing.

The government's case is being handled by the Office's Business and Securities Fraud Section. Assistant United States Attorney Tara B. McGrath is in charge of the prosecution with assistance from Assistant United States Attorney Brendan G. King of the Office's Asset Recovery Section.

The Defendant:

BRYAN ABRAHAM
Age: 22
Brooklyn, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 21-CR-411 (WFK)

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