

PRESS RELEASE

Brother, Sister, and Two Others Charged in Multi-Million Dollar Pandemic Fraud Scheme

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For Immediate Release

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

DETROIT - A Detroit area brother and sister, along with two other individuals, have been charged in a criminal complaint for their alleged role in a multi-million-dollar unemployment insurance fraud scheme targeting funds set aside for unemployment assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic, announced United States Attorney Dawn N. Ison.

Joining in the announcement were Department of Labor – Office of the Inspector General (DOL-OIG) Special Agent-in-Charge of the Great Lakes Region, Irene Lindow, and Special Agent in Charge Angie Salazar of the Department of Homeland Security – Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Detroit Field Office.

Charged are Kenny Lee Howard III, 30, Keila Lanae Howard, 34, David Christopher Davis, 25, and Stevenvan Eugene Ware, 30.

According to the complaint, the Howards and the two other defendants filed over seven hundred unemployment insurance claims in Michigan, Pennsylvania, Arizona, California, New York, Kansas, Maryland, Tennessee, Hawaii, and Guam. In some instances, the defendants are alleged to have used their own names to file claims for pandemic unemployment assistance in multiple states. In other instances, the defendants used the stolen personal identifying information of other individuals to file fraudulent claims for pandemic unemployment assistance. The complaint alleges that the defendants illegally obtained over \$3.5 million in government funds over the course of their scheme.

"This alleged scheme diverted money away from American workers in need of financial relief during the COVID-19 pandemic," said U.S. Attorney Ison. "My office is committed to prosecuting anyone who exploited our national crisis to enrich themselves, and today's charges are a reflection of that commitment."

"Partnership and cooperation are essential to these investigations," said HSI Detroit Special Agent in Charge Angie M. Salazar. "I would like to thank the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General and the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan for their work to hold offenders accountable. Our efforts speak not only to the pursuit of justice but also accountability to the American taxpayer."

"An important part of the mission of the Office of Inspector General is to investigate allegations of fraud involving unemployment insurance programs. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to aggressively investigate these types of allegations," said Irene Lindow, Special Agent-in-Charge, Great Lakes Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

A complaint is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. Trial cannot be held on felony charges in a complaint. When the investigation is completed, a determination will be made whether to seek a felony indictment.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Ryan Particka and Timothy Wyse. The investigation is being conducted jointly by the DOL- OIG and HSI.

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