

PRESS RELEASE

Federal grand jury indicts Buffalo man and woman on COVID fraud charges

Thursday, December 21, 2023

For Immediate Release

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

BUFFALO, N.Y.-U.S. Attorney Trini E. Ross announced today that a federal grand jury has returned an indictment charging Damone Hennings, 31, and Analyse Spencer, 23, both of Buffalo, NY, with conspiracy to commit mail fraud, mail fraud, and aggravated identity theft. The charges carry a minimum penalty of two years in prison, and a maximum penalty of 20 years.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Jonathan P. Cantil, who is handling the case, stated that according to the indictment, between on or about August 11, and September 7, 2020, Hennings and Spencer conspired to illegally obtain pandemic related benefits from the New York State Department of Labor. Hennings and Spencer used false identification information, including the social security numbers of other individuals, to submit 10 applications to state labor department. As a result, Hennings and Spencer received 10 debit cards containing federal funds that they were not entitled to receive. Hennings and Spencer attempted to obtain \$412,606, but actually obtained approximately \$362,268.

The indictment is the result of an investigation by Homeland Security Investigations, under the direction of Special Agent-in-Charge Matthew Scarpino, the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent-in-Charge Jonathan Mellone, and the Wyoming County Sheriff's Office, under the direction of Sheriff David Linder.

The fact that a defendant has been charged with a crime is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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