U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

PRESS RELEASE

No Amount Too Small, No Fraud Too Large—And Counting: UI Fraudsters Face Prison Time and Heavy Restitution Across Three States

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General

WASHINGTON— The U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, this week continued its unrelenting fight for the American people. Our dedicated auditors and investigators remain fully committed to rooting out fraud, waste, and abuse from labor programs and safeguarding American workers. The top priority of the DOL OIG is clear and non-negotiable: put American workers first and ensure they are never disadvantaged by those who seek to exploit the system for personal gain.

HONOLULU, Hawaii—A Hawaii woman, Phoebe Trinh, was sentenced to 24 months in prison followed by 6 months of supervised release for aggravated identity theft. Trinh was also ordered to forfeit $36,265 and pay $78,474 in restitution. She submitted a fraudulent online claim for unemployment benefits and repeatedly certified she was unemployed, despite knowing these statements were false, to obtain payments she was not entitled to. **"Phoebe Trinh's sentencing is a reminder that unemployment benefits were meant for workers in crisis—not criminals looking to exploit them. While Americans relied on these funds to survive, fraudsters drained them for personal gain," said Anthony P. D'Esposito, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Labor. "Working with Vice President Vance's White House Fraud Task Force and our state and local law enforcement partners, we will continue pursuing those who defraud American taxpayers. We will not tolerate anyone who undermines the public's trust."**

SPOKANE, Wash.—A Washington State employee, Tasha Hoggatt, was sentenced to five years of probation, including six months of home confinement, for stealing more than

$50,000 from the Paid Family Leave and Unemployment Insurance programs. She was also ordered pay $51,403 in restitution and a $4,000 fine. **“Tasha Hoggatt abused her position at the Washington Employment Security Department to steal more than $51,000 in benefits meant for workers in genuine need,” said Anthony P. D’Esposito, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Labor. “Today's sentence underscores a simple truth: if you exploit federal programs and betray the public’s trust, my office will pursue you relentlessly.”**

BALTIMORE, Md.— Elixabeth Maria Ceballos, of Maryland, was sentenced to 40 months in federal prison, followed by two years of supervised release, for conspiracy to commit wire fraud and aggravated identity theft charges in connection with a COVID-19 fraud scheme. Ceballos was ordered to pay nearly $640,000 in restitution. She engaged in a conspiracy and scheme to defraud and obtain money by means of materially false and fraudulent pretenses, representations, and promises, in connection with an unemployment insurance fraud scam. **“COVID relief funds were a lifeline for Americans who lost their jobs through no fault of their own—this defendant turned that lifeline into a personal payday,” said Inspector General D’Esposito. “Identity theft and pandemic fraud will not be tolerated. My office will continue to hold accountable anyone who preys on programs built to help Americans in need.**

For additional information on DOL OIG, please visit oig.dol.gov. If you suspect wrongdoing involving DOL programs or operations, contact the DOL OIG Hotline at (800) 347-3756 or visit oig.dol.gov/hotlinecontact.htm.

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