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**First Defendant in \$25 Million, Prison-Based Unemployment Insurance Fraud Scheme
Pleads Guilty**

FRESNO, Calif. — Daryol Richmond, 31, a Kern Valley State Prison inmate pleaded guilty today to conspiracy and aggravated identity theft charges for his role in a \$25 million unemployment insurance fraud scheme during the COVID-19 pandemic, U.S. Attorney Phillip A. Talbert announced.

According to the plea agreement, Richmond obtained the personal identifying information for other individuals, including inmates and non-inmates, without their authorization. He then provided this information to his co-conspirators inside and outside of prison through emails and jail calls. The co-conspirators then filed applications for unemployment insurance with the California Employment Development Department (EDD) that falsely stated that the inmates, minor children, and others previously worked as clothing merchants, handymen, and other jobs, and recently became unemployed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the plea agreement, Richmond acknowledged that he was responsible for \$1.4 million worth of the fraudulent claims.

This case is the product of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, EDD, and Department of Labor Office of Inspector General. Assistant U.S. Attorney Joseph Barton is prosecuting the case.

Richmond is scheduled to be sentenced by U.S. District Judge Dale A. Drozd on Sept. 19, 2022. Richmond faces up to 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine for the conspiracy charge. He also faces a mandatory, additional two years in prison for the aggravated identity theft charge. The actual sentence, however, will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of any applicable statutory factors and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account several variables.

Charges are pending against the other defendants in this case: Telvin Breaux, 29, an inmate at the California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi; Holly White, 30, of Los Angeles; Cecelia Allen, 33, of Downey; Fantasia Brown, 33, of Los Angeles; Tonisha Brown, 28, of Los Angeles; Fantesia Davis, 32, of Victorville; and Shanice White, 28, of Hawthorne. The charges against them are only allegations; they are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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