

**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

Eastern District of Michigan

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Former State Unemployment Contractor and Co-Conspirator Indicted for Stealing Unemployment Insurance Benefits**

**DETROIT** - A former contract employee with the State of Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency, and one co-conspirator, were charged today in an indictment for their roles in a scheme to steal unemployment insurance benefits, announced United States Attorney Dawn N. Ison.

Joining in the announcement were Special Agent-in-Charge Irene Lindow, Chicago Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, FBI Special Agent in Charge James A. Tarasca and Julia Dale, Director of the Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency.

Charged are Autumn Mims, 29, of Troy, Michigan and William Haynes, 25, of Detroit, Michigan.

The indictment charges Mims and Haynes with conspiring to commit wire fraud, six counts of wire fraud, and three counts of aggravated identity theft. Mims is also charged with illicitly possessing fifteen or more unauthorized access devices.

According to court records, Autumn Mims worked for the State of Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency as an Unemployment Insurance Examiner. Her duties included reviewing, processing, and verifying the legitimacy of unemployment insurance claims.

It is alleged that shortly after Mims began working for the State of Michigan, she began using her insider access to fraudulently process claims in the names of third parties without their knowledge or authorization. It is also alleged that as part of the scheme, Mims and Haynes caused unauthorized bank accounts to be fraudulently opened in the names of third parties and caused unemployment insurance claim payments to be issued to those illegitimate accounts. It is also alleged in the indictment that Mims and Haynes took control of those unemployment insurance claim payments and used the funds for their own benefit.

During the execution of a search warrant at Mims's residence, law enforcement officers located significant evidence of fraud, including personal identifying information of third parties and receipts relating to transactions made using proceeds of the fraud scheme.

Mims was previously charged in a criminal complaint for her alleged role in the scheme.

"Those who commit unemployment insurance fraud not only steal from honest taxpayers but they also make it more difficult for legitimate claimants to receive the assistance to which they are entitled," stated United States Attorney Dawn N. Ison. "We will continue to work tirelessly to fight unemployment abuse and fraud."

"An important part of the mission of the Office of Inspector General is to investigate fraud involving unemployment insurance programs. This is particularly true when an allegation involves misconduct

by the very government employees and contractors charged with overseeing those programs. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners and state workforce agencies to aggressively investigate unemployment insurance fraud,” said Irene Lindow, Special Agent-in-Charge, Chicago Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

“These defendants conspired to use Mims’ official position to take money meant for people who were unemployed during the pandemic. That money was vital to many of our community members who were suffering pandemic-related economic challenges,” said Special Agent in Charge James A. Tarasca of the FBI’s Detroit Division. “The FBI will continue to work alongside our state and federal partners to investigate unemployment insurance fraud.”

“The unemployment insurance benefits system is built on trust that the residents of Michigan will receive the money they are entitled to when they lose their jobs through no fault of their own,” said Julia Dale, Director of the Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency. “We will not tolerate an abuse of that trust. I am committed to our partnership with law enforcement as together we identify bad actors and bring them to justice.”

An indictment is merely an allegation and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Andrew J. Yahkind. The investigation is being conducted jointly by the Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Unemployment Insurance Agency.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with agencies across government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The Task Force bolsters efforts to investigate and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programs to prevent fraud by, among other methods, augmenting and incorporating existing coordination mechanisms, identifying resources and techniques to uncover fraudulent actors and their schemes, and sharing and harnessing information and insights gained from prior enforcement efforts. For more information on the Department’s response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>.

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice’s National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

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