

PRESS RELEASE

Haverhill Man Arrested and Charged With Filing Fraudulent Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Claim

Thursday, March 28, 2024

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Massachusetts

Claim allegedly filed for an alleged migrant smuggler who resides in Brazil

BOSTON – A Haverhill man was arrested and charged today in connection with a Massachusetts Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) claim he filed in 2020 for a man who was living in Brazil and who has since been charged with migrant smuggling, among other offenses.

Julio Roncaly Morais, 41, was charged by complaint with mail fraud, wire fraud, and conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud. The defendant was arrested this morning and will appear in federal court at 2:30 p.m. today.

According to the charging document, Julio Morais filed a Massachusetts PUA claim on June 3, 2020, on behalf of Chelbe Willams Moraes, who was living in Brazil when the PUA claim was filed. In the PUA application, Julio Morais allegedly certified under penalty of perjury that Chelbe Moraes was a current resident of Massachusetts and was able and available to work in Massachusetts but was unable to due to the pandemic. As a result of this alleged claim, the Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance paid a total of \$5,202 in benefits before suspending payments due to an inability to reach Chelbe Moraes.

Chelbe Moraes is currently charged [in a separate case](#) in the District of Massachusetts for alleged forced labor conspiracy, encouraging and inducing an alien to come to, enter and remain in the United States for the purpose of commercial advantage or private financial gain, knowing and in reckless disregard of the fact that such coming to, entry, and residence is or will be in violation of law and conspiring to do so; money laundering conspiracy and money laundering.

The charges of mail fraud, wire fraud, and conspiracy provide for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, a fine of up to \$250,000 and up to three years of supervised release. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy; Michael J. Krol, Special Agent in charge for the Homeland Security Investigations New England Field Office; Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; and Harry Chavis, Jr., Special Agent in Charge of the Internal Revenue Service's Criminal Investigations in Boston. Valuable assistance was provided by the Woburn and Norwood Police Departments. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kelly Begg Lawrence, James D. Herbert, and Samuel R. Feldman of the Criminal Division are prosecuting the case.

The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.