

PRESS RELEASE

Long Island Woman Sentenced for Unemployment Insurance Fraud

Thursday, February 2, 2023

For Immediate Release

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

ALBANY, NEW YORK – Briana Garland, age 30, of Uniondale, New York, was sentenced today to 2 years of probation for conspiring with a New York State prisoner to obtain unemployment insurance benefits by fraud. Garland is the fourth and final defendant to be sentenced in related cases stemming from pandemic-related schemes involving prisoners at the Bare Hill Correctional Facility in Malone, New York.

The announcement was made by United States Attorney Carla B. Freedman; Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge, New York Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (USDOL-OIG); Matthew Scarpino, Special Agent in Charge of the Buffalo Field Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI); Ketty Larco-Ward, Inspector in Charge of the Boston Division of the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS); Anthony J. Annucci, Acting Commissioner of the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (NYSDOCCS); and Roberta Reardon, Commissioner of the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL).

Garland previously pled guilty to conspiracy to commit mail fraud. She admitted to submitting a false unemployment insurance claim to NYSDOL in the name of Bare Hill inmate Reginald Thornton. Prisoners were not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits. United States District Judge Glenn T. Suddaby also ordered her to pay \$19,580 in restitution to the State of New York.

Thornton previously pled guilty to participating in two prison-based unemployment insurance fraud conspiracies and was sentenced to [51 months](#) in federal prison, to be served after his state prison term ends. Thornton's co-defendants in a related case, Lord Paulin and Rhasha Wright, were previously sentenced to [19 months](#) and [24 months and one day](#) in federal prison, respectively.

USDOL-OIG, HSI, USPIS, and the Offices of Special Investigations of NYSDOCCS and NYSDOL investigated the cases. Assistant U.S. Attorney Joshua R. Rosenthal prosecuted the cases.

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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