

PRESS RELEASE

# Pennsylvania Man Sentenced To Over 4 Years in Federal Prison For Participating In Multi-State Pandemic Unemployment Insurance Fraud Scheme

Wednesday, May 1, 2024

## For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Michigan

**DETROIT** - A man from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania was sentenced yesterday for his role in a multi-state, million-dollar unemployment insurance fraud scheme aimed at defrauding the U.S. Government and the states of Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, of funds earmarked for unemployment assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic, announced United States Attorney Dawn N. Ison.

Joining in the announcement were Special Agent in Charge Cheyvoryea Gibson, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Special Agent in Charge Charles Miller, Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation, and Irene Lindow, Special Agent in Charge, Chicago Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General.

Adrian Fluellen, 29, was sentenced to 51 months in prison and ordered to pay more than \$900,000 in restitution in the sentence handed down by United States District Judge Matthew F. Leitman.

According to court records, Fluellen and a co-defendant conspired to, and did, defraud the federal government and the states of Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Maryland of roughly \$1 million in funds intended to support individuals who had lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pair committed their crimes through the use of interstate wires and the unauthorized possession and use of social security numbers and other means of identification belonging to other individuals.

Fluellen pleaded guilty to wire fraud and conspiracy to commit wire fraud in February 2024.

Fluellen and his co-defendant, using stolen personal identification, filed hundreds of false unemployment claims with state unemployment insurance agencies in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Maryland in the names of other individuals without their knowledge or consent. The defendants then received hundreds of Bank of America prepaid debit cards in the names of those individuals loaded with roughly \$1 million in Pandemic Unemployment Assistance funds at addresses in Michigan and Pennsylvania. Fluellen, his co-defendant, and their accomplices then successfully unloaded more than \$930,000 from the cards via cash withdrawals and purchases that included jewelry, drugs, at least one vehicle, and at least one firearm.

"Taxpayer unemployment assistance funds diverted to the pockets of criminals during the pandemic resulted in less money and fewer resources being available for those genuinely in need at that challenging time" said U.S. Attorney Dawn Ison. "Along with our law enforcement partners, our office will continue to work to hold individuals who have committed and are committing such crimes of fraud, greed, and avarice responsible. "

"This sentence underscores the FBI's commitment to investigating complex financial crimes," said Cheyvoryea Gibson, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI in Michigan. "We will not tolerate the greed and selfish conduct demonstrated by those who chose to defraud the unemployment insurance system, especially when we faced an unprecedented global pandemic. The FBI and our federal partners remain steadfast in holding criminals accountable and protecting government assistance programs. The pandemic may be in our rearview mirrors, but our investigations continue to move forward in the name of justice."

"Pandemic Unemployment assistance granted by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was meant to be a lifeline for those affected the most by the global covid-19 pandemic, not as an unlimited well of funds for Adrian Fluellen," said Special Agent in Charge Charles Miller, Detroit Field Office, IRS Criminal Investigation (CI). "Not only did Mr. Fluellen defraud the US government, but he also stole the identities of hundreds of victims, jeopardizing the personal security of countless hard-working Americans. CI and our law enforcement partners are dedicated to holding accountable those who intend to game the system to feed their own unchecked greed."

"Adrian Fluellen defrauded multiple state workforce agencies by using stolen identities to obtain unemployment insurance (UI) benefits. We will continue to work with our law

enforcement and state workforce agency partners to protect the integrity of these critical benefit programs," said Irene Lindow, Special Agent-in-Charge, Great Lakes Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Carl D. Gilmer-Hill and Jessica A. Nathan. The investigation was conducted jointly by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation, and Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

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