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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**EIGHT INDIVIDUALS CHARGED IN RELATED SCHEMES
TO FRAUDULENTLY OBTAIN UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS**

CHICAGO — Eight defendants schemed to obtain unemployment benefits in the names of hundreds of individuals whose personally identifiable information was used without their knowledge, according to federal indictments unsealed in Chicago.

The indictments describe two related fraud schemes carried out over parts of three years. In one of the schemes, an employee of a health care provider in suburban Oak Lawn allegedly accessed the names, dates of birth and Social Security numbers of patients without their knowledge and provided the information to co-schemers. The patients' information was then used to file fraudulent claims for unemployment insurance benefits through the Illinois Department of Employment Security, the charges allege.

The two indictments were unsealed last week in U.S. District Court in Chicago.

The indictments were announced by John R. Lausch, Jr., United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; Jeffrey S. Sallet, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; James Vanderberg, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Regional Office of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; Gabriel L. Grchan, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division in Chicago; and Craig Goldberg, Inspector-in-Charge of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service in Chicago. Substantial assistance was provided by IDES, the Chicago Police Department, and the Matteson

Police Department. The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Matthew L. Kutcher and Nathalina Hudson.

U.S.A. v. PITTS, ET AL (18 CR 743)

This indictment charges six defendants with participating in a scheme to file or cause to be filed at least 450 fraudulent unemployment insurance claims in the names of other individuals, including the patients from the Oak Lawn health care provider. The health care provider's employee, ASHLEY WEATHERSBY, 33, of Blue Island, provided the patients' information to BRANDON PITTS, 29, of University Park, and COREY LOGSDON, 31, of Los Angeles, Calif., who used it to file for benefits through the IDES website, the indictment states. The claims falsely represented that the applicants were eligible for the benefits because their purported employers had terminated them without fault, according to the charges.

It was further part of the plan that, in exchange for money, three co-schemers – KOREY ISBELL, 31, of Van Nuys, Calif., YOSHIMI HENRY, 29, of South Holland, and KEWAN WATTS, 34, of Dolton – provided addresses to Pitts and Logsdon for the IDES to mail debit cards containing the unemployment funds, the indictment states. From November 2013 to December 2015, the six defendants caused IDES to issue approximately \$1 million in fraudulent benefits, the indictment states.

The six defendants are charged with participating in a mail or wire fraud scheme, which is punishable by up to 20 years in prison. The indictment also charges Weathersby, Pitts and Logsdon with aggravated identity theft, which is punishable by a mandatory two-year prison sentence. Pitts, Yoshimi Henry and Watts pleaded not guilty at their arraignments in U.S. District Court in Chicago. Arraignments for the other defendants have not yet been scheduled.

U.S.A. v. ANTHONY HENRY, ET AL (18 CR 726)

This indictment charges two defendants – ANTHONY HENRY, 28, of Chicago, and JEROME PACE, 34, of Chicago – with scheming to file unemployment insurance claims in the names of individuals without their knowledge and consent. From January 2013 to January 2016, Anthony Henry and Pace obtained the personally identifiable information of hundreds of individuals,

including names, addresses, Social Security numbers, and dates of birth, the indictment states. Anthony Henry and Pace allegedly caused the IDES to issue benefit funds via debit cards mailed to addresses in Chicago, Matteson, and Calumet City. The indictment charges Anthony Henry and Pace with participating in a mail fraud scheme, which is punishable by up to 20 years in prison, and knowingly possessing the information of other persons for purposes of committing a felony, which is punishable by up to 15 years in prison.

Pace is also charged individually in the indictment with wire fraud, which is punishable by up to 20 years in prison, for allegedly causing the filing of false federal income tax returns for the tax year 2014. The returns were filed on behalf of various individuals who were unaware that their personal identifying information was being utilized to file income tax returns, the indictment states. The returns fraudulently claimed income tax refunds from the IRS of more than \$432,000, the indictment states.

Anthony Henry and Pace pleaded not guilty at arraignments on Nov. 7, 2018, in U.S. District Court in Chicago.

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The public is reminded that an indictment is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. If convicted, the Court must impose a reasonable sentence under federal statutes and the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines.

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