

PRESS RELEASE

Queens Man Charged with Pandemic Fraud

Friday, February 2, 2024

For Immediate Release

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

ALBANY, NEW YORK – Joseph Osei, a/k/a “Kyngjo,” age 29, of Jamaica, New York, has been indicted on mail fraud and aggravated identity theft charges for fraudulently obtain pandemic-related unemployment insurance benefits using stolen identities.

United States Attorney Carla B. Freedman; Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge, Northeast Region, United States Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (USDOL-OIG); Ketty Larco-Ward, Inspector in Charge of the Boston Division of the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS); and Matthew Scarpino, Special Agent in Charge of the Buffalo Field Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), made the announcement.

The indictment alleges that from about August 2020 through November 2020, Osei fraudulently obtained unemployment insurance benefits worth more than \$100,000 in the names of four other people. The charges in the indictment are merely accusations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The mail fraud charges carry a maximum term of 20 years in prison, a fine of up to \$250,000, and a term of supervised release of up to 3 years. The aggravated identity theft charge carries a mandatory term of 2 years in prison, to be imposed consecutively to any other term of imprisonment. A defendant’s sentence is imposed by a judge based on the particular statute the defendant is charged with violating, the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other factors.

Osei appeared yesterday in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York in Brooklyn, New York, and was released pending an arraignment before United States Magistrate Judge Christian F. Hummel that is scheduled for February 6, 2024 in Albany.

This case is being investigated by USDOL-OIG, USPIS, and HSI, with assistance from U.S. Customs and Border Protection's New York Field Office and the New York State Department of Labor's Office of Special Investigations. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Alexander P. Wentworth-Ping and Joshua R. Rosenthal are prosecuting the case.

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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