

**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

Northern District of New York

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, September 9, 2021

**Rensselaer County Man Charged with Pandemic-Related  
Unemployment Fraud**

**Social Media Allegedly Used to Obtain Means of Identification Needed to Make  
False Claims**

ALBANY, NEW YORK – Hector J. Sanchez, age 29, of Rensselaer, New York, was arrested today on an indictment charging him with six counts of mail fraud and three counts of aggravated identity theft related to filing for, and receiving more than \$80,000 in benefits from, false unemployment insurance claims. The alleged false claims exploited federal programs intended to aid out-of-work New Yorkers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The announcement was made by Acting United States Attorney Antoinette T. Bacon; Joshua McCallister, Acting Inspector in Charge of the Boston Division of the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS); Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge, New York Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (USDOL-OIG); and Matthew Scarpino, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Buffalo Field Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

The indictment alleges that from August to November 2020, Sanchez engaged in a fraud scheme to obtain the personal identifying information of other individuals, including via social media, and file false unemployment insurance applications in their names with the New York State Department of Labor (NYS DOL). The indictment further alleges that he used debit cards linked to the false claims in order to obtain cash, goods, and services. The charges in the indictment are merely accusations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Sanchez appeared today before United States Magistrate Judge Daniel J. Stewart and was ordered detained pending a detention hearing for September 14.

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 charges for aggravated identity theft carry a mandatory term of two years in prison, to be imposed consecutive 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.

The case is being investigated by USPIS, USDOL-OIG, and HSI, with assistance from the NYSDOL Office of Special Investigations and the Albany Police Department. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney John T. Chisholm.

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>.

**Topic(s):**

Coronavirus  
Financial Fraud  
Identity Theft

**Component(s):**

[USAO - New York, Northern](#)

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