

PRESS RELEASE

# Utah County Businessman Accused of Scamming \$1.8M in COVID-19 Relief Funds is Arrested and Charged Federally

Monday, March 25, 2024

## For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Utah

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah – A Utah County businessman was arrested today after he was indicted by a federal grand jury in Salt Lake City on March 20, 2024, for wire fraud. Robert Blake Molling, 41, of Lehi, Utah, is accused of fraudulently obtaining over \$1.8 million in federal government disaster relief funds.

According to court documents, from March 2020 to April 2022, Molling fraudulently applied for COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) funds for two of his companies. These were funds Congress allocated for the Small Business Administration to provide low-interest loans to eligible small businesses going through financial disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Molling lied about his criminal history – falsely claiming that he had no criminal convictions other than minor vehicle violations. In furtherance of the crime, Molling caused multiple wire transfers via interstate commerce, and fraudulently obtained some \$1,868,100 in EIDL loan funds and advances he was not eligible to receive.

Molling is charged with seven counts of wire fraud. His initial court appearance on the indictment is scheduled for March 26, 2024, at 2:15 p.m. in courtroom 8.4 before a U.S. Magistrate Judge at the Orrin G. Hatch United States District Courthouse in downtown Salt Lake City.

U.S. Attorney, Trina A. Higgins, of the District of Utah made the announcement.

Special Assistant United States Attorney Sachi Jepson and Assistant United States Attorney Michael Thorpe of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Utah are prosecuting the case.

The Utah Federal COVID-19 Fraud Strike Force is investigating the case, which includes Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Office of Inspector General's U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), Department of Defense (DOD), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), and the U.S. Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA). The public is encouraged to share information about the abuse of the Paycheck Protection Program or other SBA programs by submitting a complaint [here](#).

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 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> and <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus/combatingfraud>

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>.

*An indictment is merely an allegation and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.*

## **Contact**

Felicia Martinez

Public Affairs Specialist

Felicia.martinez@usdoj.gov

(801) 325-3237

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