

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Pennsylvania

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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West Virginia Woman Admits Filing for Pandemic Unemployment Benefits for Incarcerated Co-defendant

PITTSBURGH, PA - A resident of Clarksburg, WV, pleaded guilty in federal court to charges of conspiracy and fraud, United States Attorney Scott W. Brady announced today.

Christina Weigner, age 48, of pleaded guilty to two counts before United States District Judge William S. Stickman IV.

In connection with the guilty plea, the Court was advised that Weigner conspired to commit fraud in connection with emergency benefits and did commit fraud by filing for pandemic unemployment assistance in her co-defendant's name.

On March 27, 2020, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed into law. The CARES Act created the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program, which provided unemployment benefits to individuals not eligible for regular unemployment compensation or extended unemployment benefits. Individuals are eligible for these unemployment benefits if they are unemployed due to the pandemic and are otherwise able work.

On June 11, 2020, an application for pandemic unemployment assistance was electronically filed in the name of Levi Stroud, an inmate at State Correctional Institution-Greene. In the application, the filer (who was later determined to be Christina Weigner) represented that she was Stroud, that Stroud was unemployed as a direct result of the pandemic, and that Stroud could accept a job if one were offered. Additionally, Weigner made 19 separate certifications that Stroud was unemployed for particular weeks due to the pandemic, even though he was serving a state sentence.

Judge Stickman scheduled sentencing for June 8, 2021 at 10:30 a.m. The law provides for a maximum total sentence of not more than 30 years in prison, a fine of \$250,000 or both. Under the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, the actual sentence imposed is based upon the seriousness of the offenses and the prior criminal history, if any, of the defendant.

Pending sentencing, the court continued Weigner on bond.

Assistant United States Attorney Brendan J. McKenna is prosecuting this case on behalf of the government.

The Office of Inspector General - U.S. Department of Labor conducted the investigation that led to the prosecution of Christina Weigner.

Topic(s):
Coronavirus
Financial Fraud

Component(s):
[USAO - Pennsylvania, Western](#)