

PRESS RELEASE

Three Sentenced for \$30 Million COVID-19 Unemployment Fraud

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For Immediate Release

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Three individuals were sentenced yesterday for their participation in a scheme to defraud the Georgia Department of Labor (GaDOL), out of tens of millions of dollars in benefits meant to assist unemployed individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Macovian Doston, 31, of Vienna, Georgia, was sentenced to 15 years in prison followed by three years of supervised release and ordered to pay restitution in an amount to be determined at a later date.

Shatara Hubbard, 36, of Warner Robins, Georgia, was sentenced to 6 years in prison followed by three years of supervised release and ordered to pay restitution in an amount to be determined at a later date.

Torella Wynn, 33, of Cordele, Georgia, was sentenced to one year in prison followed by three years of supervised release and ordered to pay restitution in an amount to be determined at a later date.

According to court documents and evidence presented in court, from March 2020 through November 2022, Doston, Hubbard, Wynn and their co-conspirators caused more than 5,000 fraudulent unemployment insurance (UI) claims to be filed with the GaDOL, resulting in at least \$30 million in stolen benefits.

To execute the scheme, the defendants and their co-conspirators created fictitious employers and fabricated lists of purported employees using personally identifiable information (PII) from thousands of identity theft victims and filed fraudulent unemployment insurance claims on the GaDOL website. The conspirators obtained PII for use in the scheme from a variety of sources, including by paying an employee of an Atlanta-area health care and hospital network to unlawfully obtain patients' PII from the hospital's databases, and by purchasing PII from other sources over the internet. Using

victims' PII, Doston, Hubbard, Wynn and their co-conspirators caused the stolen UI funds to be disbursed via prepaid debit cards mailed to various locations.

"The defendants orchestrated a \$30 million fraud by using stolen identities to obtain thousands of unemployment insurance payouts under false pretenses," said Matthew R. Galeotti, Head of the Justice Department's Criminal Division. "The Criminal Division will continue to aggressively combat complex frauds that waste public funds. I thank the prosecutors and our law enforcement partners for their diligence and dedication to seeking justice for the United States."

"Macovian Doston, Shatara Hubbard, and Torella Wynn engaged in a scheme to defraud the GaDOL by creating several fictitious employer accounts. After creating the fictitious accounts, the defendants submitted thousands of fraudulent UI claims to GaDOL to obtain UI benefits in the names of identity theft victims and other unwitting individuals who were not entitled to such benefits. The identity theft victims and unwitting participants were purported employees of several fictitious companies, which were created to execute this fraud scheme. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to protect the integrity of the UI system from those who exploit this benefit program," said Special Agent-in-Charge Mathew Broadhurst of the Southeast Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

"These sentences underline our dedication to holding people accountable who exploit federal relief programs for personal gain," said Special Agent in Charge Jonathan Ulrich of the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General. "As proven in this case, our criminal investigators and the legal teams at the Department of Justice will diligently pursue anyone who attempts to commit fraud and exploit programs created to help legitimate people and businesses affected by the global pandemic."

"DHS OIG will continue to investigate the misuse of COVID pandemic funds and together with our law enforcement partners, hold fraudsters accountable," said U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Inspector General Joseph V. Cuffari, PH.d.

The court previously sentenced four other co-conspirators that were charged in the Nov. 8, 2022 indictment. In Oct. 2024, Tyshion Nautese Hicks, 32, of Vienna, Georgia was sentenced to 12 years in prison followed by three years of supervised release. In Sept. 2024, Kenya Whitehead, 37, of Cordele, Georgia was sentenced to 28 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release. In Oct. 2024, A'Darrion Alexander, 29, of Warner Robins, Georgia was sentenced to 18 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release. In May 2024, Membrish Brown, 29, of Vienna, Georgia was sentenced to 18 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release.

DOL-OIG, IRS-CI, USPS-OIG, USPIS, USSS, HSI, and DHS-OIG investigated the case.

Trial Attorneys Lyndie Freeman, Siji Moore, Matthew Kahn, and Andrew Jaco of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section prosecuted 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, 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 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 via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form.

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