

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Massachusetts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, April 9, 2021

Two Stoneham Residents Arrested on Charges of Identity Theft and Unemployment Fraud Related to COVID-19 Pandemic

BOSTON – Two Stoneham residents were arrested today in connection with their alleged involvement in a scheme to fraudulently obtain COVID-19-related unemployment assistance.

Daniel Maleus, 33, and Lilly Nguyen, 24, were charged in a criminal complaint with wire fraud, conspiracy to commit wire fraud and aggravated identity theft. Nguyen was also charged with bank fraud, conspiracy to commit bank fraud and lying to a federal agent. Maleus and Nguyen were released on conditions after an initial appearance in federal court in Boston this afternoon.

According to the charging documents, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act ("CARES Act") created a temporary federal unemployment insurance program called Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). PUA, administered by the Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance, provides unemployment insurance benefits for individuals who are not eligible for other types of unemployment benefits (e.g., the self-employed, independent contractors, or gig economy workers).

As alleged in the complaint, Maleus and Nguyen conspired to file fraudulent claims for PUA using others' personally identifiable information. The investigation connected Maleus and Nguyen to more than \$400,000 in unemployment claims between April 2020 and March 2021. Nguyen also allegedly lied to a federal agent when questioned about pandemic-related deposits into her bank accounts in others' names.

The charges of bank fraud and conspiracy to commit bank fraud each provide for a sentence of up to 30 years in prison, up to five years of supervised release and a fine of \$1 million. The charges of wire fraud and conspiracy to commit wire fraud each provide for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, up to three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000. The charge of aggravated identity theft provides for a mandatory sentence of two years in prison to be served consecutively to any other sentence imposed, one year of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000. The charge of lying to a federal agent provides for a sentence of up to five years in prison, one year of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Acting United States Attorney Nathaniel R. Mendell; Joseph R. Bonavolanta, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Field Division; and Michael Mikulka, Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations made the announcement. Special assistance was provided by the Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance. Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Markham of Mendell's Securities, Financial & Cyber Fraud Unit is prosecuting the case.

The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

Topic(s):
Financial Fraud

Component(s):
USAO - Massachusetts

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