

PRESS RELEASE

Businesswoman Pleads Guilty to Fabricating Millions in Business Income to Obtain Pandemic Relief

Friday, March 22, 2024

For Immediate Release

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

BOSTON – A Massachusetts businesswoman pleaded guilty today to submitting fraudulent loan applications seeking COVID-19 relief.

Vanessa Nixon, 45, of Framingham, pleaded guilty to bank fraud. U.S. Senior District Court Judge Indira Talwani scheduled sentencing for June 26, 2024. Nixon was charged in February 2024.

Nixon was the owner and operator of multiple businesses in Massachusetts, including Mass Homes Investments LLC, Nixon Homes LTD and Alpha Auto Body, Inc. Between April 2020 and November 2022, Nixon submitted multiple fraudulent loan applications in the names of her various businesses to banks and the U.S. Small Business Administration through the Paycheck Protection Program and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan program that fabricated millions in business income. Nixon also created fake tax documents that she submitted with the loan applications to substantiate the fabricated business income. In total, Nixon received more than \$450,000 in loans that were subsequently forgiven by banks and the U.S. Small Business Administration.

The charge of bank fraud provides for a sentence of up to 30 years in prison, up to five years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$1 million. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy; Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge of Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; Harry Chavis, Jr., Special Agent in Charge of the Internal Revenue Service's Criminal Investigation in Boston; and Ketty Larco-Ward, Inspector in Charge of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Boston Division made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Markham of the Securities, Financial & Cyber Fraud Unit is prosecuting 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, 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>.