

PRESS RELEASE

Former State Contractor Sentenced for Stealing Unemployment Insurance Benefits

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For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Michigan

DETROIT – A Detroit resident was sentenced today for her role in a scheme to steal unemployment assistance funds, announced United States Attorney Dawn N. Ison. Autumn Mims, 31, was sentenced to 5 years and 5 months in prison after having pleaded guilty to engaging in aggravated identity theft and conspiring to engage in wire fraud. Co-defendant William Haynes, 27, will be sentenced next month.

Ison was joined in the announcement by Special Agent in Charge Cheyvoryea Gibson, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Detroit Field Division; Irene Lindow, Special Agent-in-Charge, Great Lakes Region, U.S. Department of Labor-Office of Inspector General; and Julia Dale, Director of the State of Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency

Mims was sentenced by United States District Judge Mark A. Goldsmith.

Mims was a contract employee for the State of Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency (MUIA), working as an Unemployment Insurance Examiner. Her duties included reviewing, processing, and verifying the legitimacy of unemployment insurance claims.

Mims and Haynes admitted to conspiring together to obtain illegitimate unemployment benefits issued in the names of third parties.

According to court records, shortly after Mims began working with the Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency in August 2020, she began using her insider access to fraudulently process claims in the names of third parties without their knowledge or authorization. As part of the scheme, Mims and/or Haynes (1) altered direct deposit

information for third-party unemployment insurance assistance; (2) accessed third-party unemployment insurance assistance claim information without authorization; (3) completed false and fraudulent certifications for third-party unemployment insurance assistance benefits; (4) opened unauthorized bank accounts in the names of third parties; (5) conducted cash withdrawals of unemployment insurance assistance issued in the names of third parties; and (6) conducted financial transactions utilizing unemployment insurance assistance funds issued in the names of third parties.

Mims also admitted that while she was working with the MUIA and executing her fraud, she was also fraudulently obtaining unemployment insurance benefits for herself by falsely claiming that she was unemployed.

Mims was also ordered to pay \$583,409 in restitution.

United States Attorney Ison stated: "We remain committed to prosecuting those who choose to enrich themselves by stealing government funds earmarked for those members of our community who are truly in need."

"The defendant's decision to conspire in order to obtain unlawful unemployment benefits for personal profit while businesses and families were struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic is unconscionable," said Special Agent in Charge Cheyvorrea Gibson of the FBI in Michigan. "Further, Ms. Mims' actions were a direct betrayal of the public trust granted to her as a contract Unemployment Insurance Examiner for the State of Michigan. Providing false information and using stolen identities to fraudulently gain access to relief funds is a theft of taxpayer money. The FBI remains committed to working with our network of law enforcement partners to investigate and hold those accountable who seek to personally profit and defraud government assistance programs."

"Autumn Mims, a former contract employee for the State of Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency (MUIA), conspired with William Haynes to defraud the state of Michigan and the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program. Mims abused her access to MUIA systems to fraudulently process unemployment insurance (UI) claims that Haynes had fraudulently certified, the proceeds of which were deposited into bank accounts that they controlled," stated Special Agent-in-Charge Irene Lindow, Great Lakes Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General. "We and our law enforcement partners are committed to identifying and prosecuting the criminals who took advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic by fraudulently obtaining pandemic UI benefits using stolen identities."

"Autumn Mims' criminal scheme tarnished all the critical and tireless work that staff at the Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency performed during a global pandemic that hit Michigan hard. She does not by any stretch reflect the outstanding work habits of UIA's professional employees, who abide by strict ethics and security clearance policies," said MUIA Director Julia Dale. "I am proud of the dedication demonstrated every day in service to their fellow Michiganders and employers. UIA will continue to work with law enforcement at the local, state, and federal level to ensure that bad actors are brought to justice."

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Andrew J. Yahkind. The investigation was conducted jointly by the Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Federal Bureau of Investigation's Detroit Area Public Corruption Task Force, and the Unemployment Insurance Agency, Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity.

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