

**Department of Justice**  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Northern District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, September 23, 2021

## **Former SUNY Student Pleads Guilty to Unemployment Insurance Fraud**

BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK – Makahi Daevon Bryant, age 20, of Brooklyn, New York, pled guilty today to fraudulently obtaining over \$13,000 in unemployment insurance benefits from the State of California.

The announcement was made by Acting United States Attorney Antoinette T. Bacon; Matthew Scarpino, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Buffalo Field Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI); and Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge, New York Region, United States Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (USDOL-OIG).

As part of his guilty plea to one count of access device fraud, Bryant admitted that he obtained debit cards containing California unemployment insurance benefits in the names of other individuals. During September and October 2020, while he was a student at the State University of New York at Delhi (SUNY Delhi), Bryant effected unauthorized transactions using the debit cards to obtain cash, goods, and services.

Sentencing is scheduled for January 26, 2022, in Binghamton, before Senior United States District Judge Thomas J. McAvoy. Bryant faces a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison, a fine of up to \$250,000, and a term of supervised release of up to 3 years. A defendant's sentence is imposed by a judge based on the particular statute the defendant is charged with violating, the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other factors.

This case was investigated by HSI and USDOL-OIG, with assistance from the University Police Department at SUNY Delhi, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney John T. Chisholm.

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>.

**Topic(s):**  
Coronavirus  
Financial Fraud

**Component(s):**  
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