

## **Arizona Attorney General**

# **Attorney General Kris Mayes Announces Sentencing in Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Fraud Case**

*Tuesday, April 11, 2023*

**PHOENIX**—Attorney General Kris Mayes today announced that Daniel Lucero, age 34, and Makallyn Hunt, age 22, were sentenced in Maricopa County Superior Court on Theft and Aggravated Taking the Identity of Another charges. Lucero had entered a guilty plea on February 24, 2023, to one count of Theft, a class 2 felony, and one count of Aggravated Taking the Identity of Another, a class 3 felony, and was sentenced to 7 years in the Arizona Department of Corrections to be followed by a period of probation with white collar terms.

Hunt had entered a guilty plea on January 20, 2023, to one count of Theft, a class 5 felony, and one count of Aggravated Taking the Identity of Another, a class 3 felony, and was sentenced to 1.5 years in the Arizona Department of Corrections to be followed by a period of probation with white collar terms. Both were also ordered to pay \$46,741 to the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment and \$181,746 to the Arizona Department of Economic Security.

"The sentencing of Lucero and Hunt underscores my office's commitment to protecting the interests of taxpayers and vulnerable communities," said Attorney General Mayes. "Misusing the identities of elderly individuals to fraudulently collect benefits is unacceptable. Those engaging in fraud are on notice that my office will investigate and prosecute these crimes to the fullest extent of the law."

"Daniel Lucero and Makallyn Hunt misused the identities of others to collect Pandemic Unemployment Assistance fraudulently. These benefits were intended to assist those who experienced unemployment due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This sentencing illustrates that individuals who engage in unemployment insurance fraud will be held accountable. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to investigate those who exploit the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program," said Quentin Heiden, Special Agent-in-Charge, Western Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

The indictment alleged that Lucero and Hunt broke into hundreds of mailboxes throughout Arizona and Colorado and used their victims' identities to apply for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance payments. Through a joint investigation by the Glendale Police Department and the United States Office of Inspector General – Department of Labor, the couple was apprehended and found with thousands of personal identifying information and dozens of fraudulently acquired prepaid debit cards. The victims in this investigation included hundreds of elderly individuals unaware that their identities were used to apply for federally funded state assistance monies.

Assistant Attorney General Richard Baek prosecuted the case.