

PRESS RELEASE

# Former State Contractor Pleads Guilty to Fraudulent Unemployment Insurance Scheme

Wednesday, May 3, 2023

## For Immediate Release

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

**DETROIT** - A Detroit woman pleaded guilty today to stealing over \$550,000 as part of an extensive unemployment fraud and identity theft conspiracy while working for the State of Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency, announced United States Attorney Dawn N. Ison.

Joining in the announcement were Irene Lindow, Special Agent-in-Charge, Chicago Region, U.S. Department of Labor-Office of Inspector General; James A. Tarasca, Special Agent in Charge of the Detroit Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; and Julia Dale, Director of the State of Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency

Autumn Mims, 30, pleaded guilty today before 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.

According to court records, shortly after Mims began working with the MUIA 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 personally (1) altered third-party contact information for unemployment insurance assistance; (2) accessed third-party unemployment insurance assistance claim information without authorization; (3) authenticated unauthorized access attempts for third-party unemployment insurance assistance information; (4) dismissed fraud prevention triggers and information requests relating to third-party unemployment insurance assistance; (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.

As a result of the conspiracy, over \$550,000 in fraudulent unemployment assistance payments were made by the State of Michigan.

Sentencing is set for September 6, 2023 before Judge Goldsmith. Mims faces a mandatory two-year sentence of imprisonment for having engaged in aggravated identity theft. She also faces up to 20 years in prison for having conspired to engage in wire fraud.

"Far from being unemployed as she claimed, Autumn Mims worked hard to abuse her position with the State of Michigan and steal taxpayer money. My office and our law enforcement partners are committed to working even harder to ensure that Mims and others who choose to engage in similar frauds are held fully accountable," stated U.S. Attorney Ison.

"Autumn Mims, while working as an Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency examiner, abused her access to unemployment insurance (UI) data systems to defraud the state of Michigan and the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program. Mims violated the public's trust by knowingly approving fraudulent unemployment claims, the proceeds of which were deposited into bank accounts that she controlled. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners and state workforce agencies to protect the integrity of the UI system," stated Special Agent-in-Charge Irene Lindow, Great Lakes Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

"Autumn Mims used her position at the Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency to steal money from people who were suffering pandemic-related economic challenges," said James A. Tarasca, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's Detroit Division. "The FBI, along with our state and federal partners, will investigate this type of scheme and bring to justice those who defraud the unemployment system."

"It's especially galling when someone employed by UIA and who was entrusted in a time of statewide crisis with helping the residents of Michigan instead violates that trust to satisfy her own greed," said UIA Director Julia Dale. "Let this case put bad actors on notice: We will continue to work with law enforcement at the local, state, and federal

level and use every tool we have to see that justice is served. That is our pledge as we strive to transform the UIA into a national model for fraud-free, fair and fast service.”

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Andrew J. Yahkind. The investigation is being conducted jointly by the Department of Labor—Office of Inspector General, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Unemployment Insurance Agency, Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity

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