

PRESS RELEASE

Georgia Woman Sentenced in Rhode Island for Role in Multi-Million Dollar Romance Fraud Schemes

Monday, March 11, 2024

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Rhode Island

PROVIDENCE, RI – A Georgia woman who played a key role in a romance scam conspiracy that defrauded seniors in several states, including Rhode Island, out of at least \$5.8 million has been sentenced in U.S. District Court in Rhode Island to nearly four years in federal prison, announced United States Attorney Zachary A. Cunha.

Syretta Scherer, 42, of Snellville, GA, pleaded guilty on April 28, 2023, to a charge of conspiracy to commit money laundering. She was sentenced by U.S. District Court Chief Judge John J. McConnell, Jr., on March 7, 2024, to 46 months of incarceration to be followed by two years of federal supervised release.

The Court found that that Scherer laundered nearly \$1.1 million of the nearly \$3 million in stolen proceeds laundered by members of the conspiracy during the time she was part of the conspiracy, money that was stolen primarily from widows through internet-based romance scams. To carry out the schemes, members of the conspiracy contacted victims using app-based communication platforms, then cultivated relationships of trust and convincing their victims that money was needed for various purposes, among them supposed serious medical issues. The scammers directed their victims to send money via mail or wire transfer to various persons and addresses. The money would be deposited into various accounts controlled by Scherer and others before being redirected elsewhere.

According to information presented to the court, in late 2017, in support of her fraudulent activity, Scherer created a sham company, Precise Carriers, that she used to open numerous bank accounts, at different banks, into which victim funds were

deposited. Beginning in February 2018 and continuing into November 2019, Scherer used bank accounts in her name and in the name of the sham company to deposit and withdraw victim funds, often in a structured manner to avoid bank currency transaction requirements. On multiple dates, Scherer deposited victim funds at multiple bank branches on a single day so as to avoid questions about the amounts of the deposits and withdrawals. When some of the banks questioned her banking activity, and shut down an account into which victim funds had been deposited, Scherer opened another account. As part of the scheme, Scherer also recruited others, including her friends, to open bank accounts that she used to launder victim funds.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Denise M. Barton and John P. McAdams.

The matter was investigated by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, with the assistance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Labor-Office of Inspector General, and U.S. Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration in Atlanta.

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Contact

Jim Martin

(401) 490-1092

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