

PRESS RELEASE

Man Sentenced to Three Years in Federal Prison for Stealing over \$197,000 in Coronavirus Aid and Relief Funds from Four States

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For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS- Daniel Jibunor, 31, of Nigeria, has been sentenced to 3 years in federal prison after pleading guilty to aggravated identity theft and wire fraud for his role in stealing over \$197,000 in unemployment insurance funds the provided by the 2020 Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

According to court documents, on September 11, 2020, Jibunor used a fake debit card under a fake name to try to purchase \$1,850 in Western Union money orders at a Kroger in Bloomington, Indiana. When a Kroger employee asked to see the bank card, Jibunor attempted to give her a different bank card in his own name. Bloomington Police Department officers were called to the scene. During their investigation, officers searched Jibunor's person and vehicle and located two fraudulently obtained unemployment insurance debit cards, two fake debit cards, a GoBank Green Dot card, approximately \$12,980 in cash, and 21 money orders totaling \$19,540.

The unemployment insurance debit cards Jibunor in the names of real people, including at least ten victims whose stolen identities were used to file fraudulent unemployment claims. Jibunor used the cards to purchase money orders from various businesses, including Kroger, Walmart, and the U.S. Post Office, and to make ATM withdrawals.

During an interview with investigators, Jibunor admitted to using unemployment debit cards to obtain money orders for another individual he would not identify. Jibunor possessed payment cards loaded with approximately \$161,511 in unemployment insurance funds stolen from California and Nevada. In addition, the GoBank Green Dot card was loaded with unemployment insurance funds stolen from the programs in

Arizona and Illinois, as well as \$36,102 in fraud proceeds associated with an Economic Injury Disaster Loan.

In sum, Jibunor's criminal conduct resulted in at least \$197,613 in actual losses to unemployment offices in California, Arizona, Nevada, and Illinois as well as the federal government.

"At the height of the global pandemic, this defendant decided to steal emergency funds intended to be a vital lifeline for families in need," said Zachary A. Myers, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana. "Stealing identities and relief money during a disaster is a despicable crime that merits serious punishment. The federal prison sentence imposed today demonstrates that the U.S. Attorney's Office and our law enforcement partners are committed to finding the criminals who have defrauded COVID-19 emergency response programs and holding them accountable."

"Daniel Jibunor defrauded the state workforce agencies of Arizona, California, Illinois, and Nevada by participating in a conspiracy to file fraudulent unemployment insurance (UI) claims in the names of identity theft victims. Jibunor stole benefits intended to assist those who became unemployed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We will continue working with our law enforcement partners to protect the integrity of the UI system from those who exploit these benefit programs," said Irene Lindow, Special Agent in Charge, Great Lakes Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

"Those who profit off programs meant to help others in need is unacceptable. This sentence illustrates the FBI's commitment to combating unemployment fraud," said FBI Indianapolis Acting Special Agent in Charge Robert "Alex" Middleton. "Along with our law enforcement partners, we will continue to aggressively identify and pursue fraudsters who steal money and hold them accountable."

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, and the Bloomington Police Department. The sentence was imposed by U.S. District Court Judge Jane Magnus-Stinson. Judge Stinson also ordered that Jibunor pay \$197,613 in restitution and be supervised by the U.S. Probation Office for 1 year following his release from federal prison.

U.S. Attorney Myers thanked Assistant United States Attorney Kyle M. Sawa, who prosecuted this case.

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 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>

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DISASTER FRAUD

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