

PRESS RELEASE

# Metro Atlanta man charged with laundering funds from COVID-19 unemployment relief and submitting fraudulent EIDL loan application

Monday, August 14, 2023

## For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Georgia

ATLANTA - Austin Martin Siampwizi has been arraigned on federal charges of concealment money laundering, money laundering conspiracy, and wire fraud.

"Money launderers used the COVID-19 pandemic to financially benefit while millions of Americans were suffering," said U.S. Attorney Ryan K. Buchanan. "We will continue to prosecute individuals who defrauded this program at the expense of vulnerable citizens in need of this critical relief."

"An important part of the mission of the Office of Inspector General is to investigate allegations of fraud related to unemployment insurance programs," said Mathew Broadhurst, Special Agent-in-Charge, Southeast Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General. "We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to aggressively investigate these types of allegations."

According to U.S. Attorney Buchanan, the indictment, and other information presented in court: Austin Martin Siampwizi allegedly laundered money procured from fraudulent unemployment claims submitted to the Employment Security Department of Washington State ("ESD"). These claims were filed using personal identifiable information stolen from more than 50 individuals. Additionally, Siampwizi has been charged with wire fraud for allegedly submitting a fraudulent Economic Injury Disaster Loan ("EIDL") application to the SBA.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act ("CARES Act") created a temporary federal program that provided up to 39 weeks of unemployment benefits for

those unemployed because of the pandemic and included a provision to provide temporary benefits to individuals who had exhausted their entitlement to regular benefits or were otherwise not eligible. That temporary federal program was administered by state employment agencies. The CARES Act also allowed the U.S. Small Business Administration (“SBA”) to offer funding to business owners negatively affected by the pandemic.

Austin Martin Siampwizi, 46, of Atlanta, Georgia, was arraigned before U.S. Magistrate Judge J. Christopher C. Bly. Siampwizi was indicted by a federal grand jury on July 25, 2023.

Members of the public are reminded that the indictment only contains charges. The defendant is presumed innocent of the charges and it will be the government’s burden to prove the defendant’s guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

This case is being investigated by the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Secret Service, the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation, the Department of Homeland Security-Homeland Security Investigations, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Sarah E. Klapman is prosecuting the 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, 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>.

For further information please contact the U.S. Attorney’s Public Affairs Office at [USAGAN.PressEmails@usdoj.gov](mailto:USAGAN.PressEmails@usdoj.gov) or (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the U.S.

Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is <http://www.justice.gov/usao-ndga>.

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