

PRESS RELEASE

# Plymouth Man Arrested for Theft of Government Benefits Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Wednesday, October 4, 2023

## For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Massachusetts

## Defendant allegedly submitted dozens of fraudulent claims in the names of others

BOSTON – A Plymouth man was arrested today in connection with his alleged involvement in a scheme to fraudulently obtain and misuse COVID-19 relief funds from multiple assistance programs.

Ferris Brooks, 41, was charged with theft of government property. Brooks was released on conditions following an initial appearance in federal court in Boston this afternoon before U.S. District Court Magistrate Judge Judith G. Dein.

According to the charging documents, from April to December 2020, Brooks submitted dozens of applications for government benefits, both in his own name and in the names of others, that contained false information. Specifically, Brooks allegedly submitted an application in the name of a fake business for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan with the U.S. Small Business Administration. Brooks also allegedly submitted more than 15 applications for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance in the names of others that contained false information, as well as filed approximately 10 tax returns for Economic Impact Payments in the names of others. Brooks allegedly directed payments on these fraudulent claims to bank accounts he had opened in his own name.

The charge of theft of government property provides for a sentence of up to 10 years in prison, up to three years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy; Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge of Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; Harry Chavis, Jr., Special Agent in Charge of the Internal Revenue Service's Criminal Investigation in Boston and Ketty Larco-Ward, Inspector in Charge of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Boston Division made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Markham of the Securities, Financial & Cyber Fraud Unit 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>.

The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

*Updated October 4, 2023*

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**Topic**

**CORONAVIRUS**

**Component**

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