

PRESS RELEASE

Boston Man Sentenced for Frequently Obtaining COVID-Relief Funds

Thursday, December 19, 2024

For Immediate Release

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

BOSTON – A Boston man was sentenced yesterday in federal court in Boston after being convicted of fraudulently obtaining pandemic-related relief funds from the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).

Robert Platt Jr., 45, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Myong J. Joun to time served (one day), to be followed by two years of supervised release. Platt was also ordered to pay \$20,833 in restitution and forfeiture. In September 2024, Platt pleaded guilty to one count of wire fraud and one count of making false statements. Platt arrested in February 2024 along with over 40 Heath Street Gang members/associates, who were charged with racketeering conspiracy, drug trafficking, firearms charges, and financial frauds, including COVID-related fraud.

Among other relief programs, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act created the PPP, a temporary loan program directed at small businesses. PPP loans were processed and funded by participating lenders and guaranteed by the U.S. Small Business Administration. If the small business used the loan funds for permissible expenses, the loan could be forgiven.

In April 2021, Platt submitted a fraudulent PPP loan application on behalf of his purported construction business. The application contained multiple false statements, including false representations regarding the fictitious business's income in 2019 and the purpose of the loan. Platt also submitted false tax records in support of his loan application. Based on the fraudulent application, Platt received approximately \$20,833, which he then spent on non-business-related expenses, including transactions at Encore Boston Harbor Casino.

United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy; Boston Police Commissioner Michael Cox; Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge of Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; and Jonathan Wlodyka, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Internal Revenue

Service Criminal Investigations made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Sarah Hoefle and Lucy Sun of the Organized Crime & Gang Unit prosecuted the case.

This effort is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

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>.

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