



THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT *of* JUSTICE

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Chester Woman Charged With Pandemic Fraud Scheme

SCRANTON - The United States Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Pennsylvania announced that Muneerah Abdullah, age 45, of Chester, Pennsylvania, was indicted on February 27, 2025, by a federal grand jury on six counts of wire fraud for fraudulently obtaining unemployment benefits related to COVID-19 emergency relief funds.

According to Acting U.S. Attorney John C. Gurganus, the indictment alleges that from in or about April 2020 to in or about October 2020, Abdullah filed Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) claims for herself and other ineligible recipients, to include inmates. The alleged scheme included making false representations in connection with these claims including, being unemployed as a result of Covid-19, providing false employment or wage history, falsely stating the applicant was willing, and able to work each day, and was seeking full-time employment. It is also alleged that Abdullah received kickbacks when she filed fraudulent claims for PUA with another's information.

The PUA program was created by the March 2020 CARES Act, as part of the United States government's efforts to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the public's health and economic well-being. The PUA program was designed to provide unemployment benefits to individuals not eligible for regular unemployment compensation or extended unemployment benefits.

The case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Inspector General. Assistant United States Attorney Alisan V. Martin is prosecuting the case.

A sentence following a finding of guilt is imposed by the Judge after consideration of the applicable federal sentencing statutes and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines. The maximum penalty under federal law for wire fraud is 20 years' imprisonment. Each charge may also carry a fine and a term of supervised release following imprisonment.

Indictments are only allegations. All persons charged are presumed to be innocent unless and until found guilty in court.

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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