

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Eastern District of Pennsylvania

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, December 16, 2021

Chester County Woman Sentenced to Over One Year for Stealing Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Funds

Co-conspirator Was Previously Sentenced to 1 ½ Years for His Role in the Offense

PHILADELPHIA – United States Attorney Jennifer Arbittier Williams announced that Emily Baier, 28, of West Chester, PA, was sentenced to 14 months in prison and five years of supervised release by United States District Judge Eduardo C. Robreno for falsely claiming and taking approximately \$47,000 in pandemic unemployment compensation authorized by the CARES Act. Her co-conspirator, Jacob Fulton, 33, of Coatesville, PA, was sentenced to one and a half years in prison for his role the scheme earlier this month.

On March 27, 2020, the CARES ACT was enacted and created the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (“PUA”) program, to provide unemployment benefits to workers who lost their jobs because of the COVID-19 pandemic and who were ineligible for other unemployment compensation. The defendant took advantage of and unlawfully profited from the PUA program by submitting and continuing to certify fraudulent PUA claims for herself and for inmates of Chester County Prison, including her co-conspirator, knowing that neither she nor these inmates were entitled to these benefits.

Specifically, in May 2020, the defendant filed a PUA claim for herself knowing that she was not eligible for such benefits because she was not unemployed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Baier continued to submit weekly submissions of certification that she and her co-conspirator—who was at that time an inmate of Chester County Prison—were eligible for these benefits, all while knowing that neither she nor her co-conspirator were eligible for these benefits. Then, between July and August 2020, the defendant schemed with her co-conspirator to file PUA claims on behalf of at least two other inmates and take a cut of the claim payments for themselves. In September 2021, the defendant pleaded guilty mail fraud and conspiracy to commit mail fraud based on this conduct.

“Pandemic Unemployment Assistance funds are intended to help working Americans continue to pay their bills and make ends meet, even when hours and wages have dropped dramatically due to the pandemic,” said U.S. Attorney Williams. “Thieves who attempt to take these funds unlawfully are taking advantage of others’ misfortune – ripping them off while also ripping off all taxpayers who fund the program. Baier fraudulently obtained thousands of dollars in funds that could have helped struggling individuals.”

“Those who think they can exploit the system by stealing from the PUA Program should take notice of the sentence Baier received,” said IRS Criminal Investigation Special Agent in Charge Yury Kruty. “We will continue to use all resources at our disposal to investigate and hold accountable fraudsters like Baier.”

“Emily Baier engaged in a scheme with her co-defendant to defraud the Pennsylvania Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program by obtaining personal information from inmates in Chester County Jail and submitting fraudulent claims for PUA benefits on behalf of those inmates even though they were incarcerated and not able and available to work. The U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General and its partners, such as the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, will continue to work together to preserve the integrity of unemployment compensation benefit programs by vigorously pursuing those who commit this type of fraud,” stated Special Agent-In-Charge Syreeta Scott, Philadelphia Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigations, and the U.S. Department of Labor Office of the Inspector General, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney J. Jeanette Kang.

Topic(s):

Financial Fraud

Component(s):

[USAO - Pennsylvania, Eastern](#)

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