

PRESS RELEASE

Detroit Man Pleads Guilty in \$1.9M in Unemployment Insurance and Pandemic Fraud Scheme

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For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Michigan

DETROIT – A Detroit resident pleaded guilty today related to an extensive unemployment insurance and Paycheck Protection Program fraud scheme, announced United States Attorney Jerome F. Gorgon Jr.

Tauheed Salik Wilder, 43, pleaded guilty today before Judge Brandy R. McMillion to one count of wire fraud.

Joining in the announcement was Anthony P. D'Esposito, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Karen Wingerd, Special Agent in Charge, Detroit Field Office, IRS Criminal Investigation and Jason Palmer, Director, Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency.

According to court records, Wilder filed hundreds of false claims for unemployment insurance benefits in multiple states, including Michigan and California, in numerous other individuals' names and without their consent. Wilder used, or arranged for others to use, ATM cards issued in the names of identity theft victims to withdraw the fraudulently obtained unemployment funds. In total, Wilder's conduct caused actual UI benefit losses of \$1.8 million. Further, Wilder accepted responsibility for two fraudulent Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans he applied for and received in his own name, totaling approximately \$84,000. In total, Wilder's scheme caused actual losses of \$1.9M.

U.S. Attorney Gorgon stated, "Fraud against the government is itself a pandemic. One that hurts the American taxpayer and undermines the strength of our economy. Each of these prosecutions is a dose of justice."

"Tauheed Wilder's guilty plea sends a clear message: the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General will relentlessly pursue those who steal from taxpayers through

fraudulent unemployment insurance claims. Protecting the integrity of these programs for American workers in need remains one of our highest priorities,” said Anthony P. D’Esposito, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General. “Together with our law enforcement partners, we are going on offense against fraud—tracking down bad actors who try to game the system and line their pockets at taxpayers’ expense.”

“This guilty plea is an important victory for America’s taxpayers who play by the rules and don’t use assistance programs as a cash slush fund,” said Karen Wingerd, Special Agent in Charge, Detroit Field Office, IRS Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI). “Today’s plea is also part of a much larger and coordinated effort by the IRS-CI and Department of Justice to aggressively find and crack down on fraudsters misusing taxpayer dollars. For those still hiding in this shadowy world, know that we will find you and hold you fully accountable.”

“Mr. Wilder joins a growing list of fraudsters who thought they could get away with fleecing the unemployment insurance program in Michigan,” said Michigan UIA Director Jason Palmer. “He should be ashamed of his failed scheme to steal money from hard-working Michiganders and businesses who support the unemployment insurance program. He may have thought he got away with it, but in the end he and other bad actors will learn the Unemployment Insurance Agency will come after them and hold them accountable for their crimes.”

Wilder will be sentenced by Judge McMillion on July 30, 2026. He faces a maximum sentence of up to 20 years’ imprisonment on the wire fraud charge.

The Department of Justice has created the National Fraud Enforcement Division. The core mission of the Fraud Division is to zealously investigate and prosecute those who steal or fraudulently misuse taxpayer dollars. Department of Justice efforts to combat fraud support President Trump’s Task Force to Eliminate Fraud, a whole-of-government effort chaired by Vice President J.D. Vance to eliminate fraud, waste, and abuse within Federal benefit programs.

This case was investigated by special agents of the Department of Labor Office of the Inspector General (DOL-OIG), the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI), and the Michigan UIA. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Ryan A. Particka.

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