

PRESS RELEASE

Dunkirk man pleads guilty to theft of government funds involving COVID-19 fraud

Friday, March 20, 2026

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of New York

BUFFALO, N.Y. –U.S. Attorney Michael DiGiacomo announced today that Lamont Brown, 37, of Dunkirk, NY, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge John L. Sinatra, Jr. to theft of government funds, which carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Franz M. Wright, who is handling the case, stated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, Brown recruited others to apply for unemployment assistance compensation through the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program for which they were not entitled. Brown and his recruits obtained personally identifiable information and used that information to obtain PUA funds from the Puerto Department of Labor and Human Resources. Brown received a portion of the PUA funds the recruits received as payment for allowing them to participate in the scheme. In July 2020, Brown personally received a check totaling \$10,122.00 from the Puerto Rico Department of Labor and Human Resources, which he deposited into a checking account at a Lake Shore Savings Bank within the Western District of New York. He later withdrew and spent the funds. The money was issued through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Brown did not reside in, nor had he resided or worked in Puerto Rico. The total loss to the Puerto Rico Department of Labor and Human Resources due to the scheme was \$67,524.

The plea is the result of an investigation by Homeland Security Investigations, under the direction of Special Agent-in-Charge Erin Keegan, and the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent-in-Charge Jonathan Mellone, Northeast Region.

Sentencing is scheduled for August 5, 2026, before Judge Sinatra.

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