

**PRESS RELEASE**

# **Former Bureau of Labor Statistics Economist Pleads Guilty to Making False Statements**

Thursday, April 3, 2025

## **For Immediate Release**

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

[USADC.Media@usdoj.gov](mailto:USADC.Media@usdoj.gov)

## **Admits Lying to Receive Sick Leave Pay While Concurrently Working for Another Employer During the Pandemic**

WASHINGTON — Matthew Hong, 28, of Middlesex, New Jersey, pleaded guilty today in U.S. District Court to making false statements in connection with sick leave compensation that he received from his federal government employer when he was not sick but instead working remotely for a private company during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The plea was announced by U.S. Attorney Edward R. Martin, Jr., Supervisory Official Matthew Galeotti of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, FBI Special Agent in Charge Sean Ryan of the FBI Washington Field Office, Criminal and Cyber Division, and Special Agent in Charge Troy W. Springer of the National Capital Region, U.S. Department of Labor – Office of Inspector General (DOL-OIG).

Hong pleaded guilty to one count of false statements and faces a maximum penalty of five years in prison. Sentencing is scheduled for July 17. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

According to court documents, Hong was an economist at the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) within the U.S. Department of Labor from April 2020 until July 2023. At BLS, Hong worked on the Current Employment Statistics program within the National Estimates Branch that produced, among other things, the monthly estimates of nonfarm employment numbers. In that role Hong had access to certain Principal Federal Economic Indicators (PFEI), such as the employment and unemployment numbers,

several days prior to their public disclosure. This information was subject to strict security procedures and safeguards due to the PFEI's sensitivity and ability to affect financial markets if prematurely disclosed.

Beginning in June 2022, and while still employed at BLS and working remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Hong began full-time employment at a global financial institution headquartered in New York City, as a senior associate in a group that analyzed and developed macroeconomic scenarios used in the company's forecasting. As part of his job at the financial institution, Hong developed economic narratives and forecasts that involved multiple macroeconomic variables.

On at least 55 different occasions between June 2022 and July 2023, Hong made entries in BLS's time and attendance system that falsely represented that he was sick on a given workday and sought sick leave compensation from BLS when, in fact, he was not sick but instead was working for the private financial institution. Based on these false statements, Hong received over \$13,300 in sick leave compensation from BLS.

The case is being investigated by the FBI Washington Field Office and DOL-OIG. It is being prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Rami Sibay for the District of Columbia and Trial Attorney Matthew F. Sullivan of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kathryn Rakoczy and Maria Vento provided substantial assistance with the investigation and prosecution.

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*Updated April 3, 2025*

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## Topics

**FALSE CLAIMS ACT**

**FINANCIAL FRAUD**

## Components

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