

**PRESS RELEASE**

# **Jury Convicts Canadian Citizen of Pandemic Fraud**

Friday, May 23, 2025

**For Immediate Release**

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

ALBANY, NEW YORK – Joseph Osei, a/k/a/ "Kynjo," age 30, a Canadian citizen formerly of Albany, was convicted today following a five-day jury trial of four counts of mail fraud, one count of access device fraud, and two counts of aggravated identity theft for fraudulently obtaining COVID-19 pandemic-related unemployment insurance benefits using stolen identities. Jurors deliberated for less than 2 hours before returning a guilty verdict on all counts.

United States Attorney John A. Sarcone III; Ketty Larco-Ward, Inspector in Charge of the Boston Division of the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS); Erin Keegan, Special Agent in Charge of the Buffalo Field Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI); and Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge, Northeast Region, United States Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (USDOL-OIG), made the announcement.

The trial evidence showed that from August 2020 through November 2020, Osei fraudulently obtained unemployment insurance benefits from the New York State Department of Labor worth more than \$100,000. Additional evidence also included Osei's schemes to defraud the state workforce agencies of California, Rhode Island, and Arizona using stolen identities to apply for and obtain pandemic unemployment insurance benefits.

U.S. Attorney John A. Sarcone III stated: "Joseph Osei stole real people's identities to illegally exploit lifeline programs set up to help Americans during the pandemic. Osei worked hard to commit unemployment fraud, and federal and state investigators worked even harder to uncover his scheme, culminating in today's quick guilty verdict. Today's result marks more than 45 convictions of pandemic fraudsters that my office has obtained with its law enforcement partners."

USPIS Inspector in Charge Ketty Larco-Ward stated: "The pandemic relief programs were created as lifelines during an unprecedented period in our history. The actions of the defendant not only diverted funds from those in need but also victimized unsuspecting people by stealing their personal identifying information. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service will relentlessly pursue those who misuse the mail for fraud and bring them to justice."

HSI Special Agent in Charge Erin Keegan said: "HSI Albany is proud to have played a role in ensuring Joseph Osei faces the consequences of his egregious crimes. Together with our local, state and federal partners, New Yorkers' well-being will always be our foremost priority."

Sentencing is scheduled for September 23, 2025. The mail fraud convictions carry a maximum term of 20 years in prison, a fine of up to \$250,000, and a term of supervised release of up to 3 years. The access device fraud conviction carries a maximum term of imprisonment of up to 15 years. The aggravated identity theft charge carries a mandatory term of 2 years in prison, to be imposed consecutively to any other term of imprisonment. A defendant's sentence is imposed by a judge based on the particular statutes the defendant is convicted of violating, the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, and other factors.

This case was investigated by USPIS, HSI, and USDOL-OIG, with assistance from U.S. Customs and Border Protection's New York Field Office and the New York State Department of Labor's Office of Special Investigations. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Alexander P. Wentworth-Ping and Joshua R. Rosenthal are prosecuting the case.

*Updated May 23, 2025*

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## Topics

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