

**PRESS RELEASE**

# **Last of Three Memphis Women Who Defrauded Tennessee and Federal Programs of Over \$580,000 Sentenced to Federal Prison**

Friday, February 20, 2026

**For Immediate Release**

U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Tennessee

**Memphis, TN** – A Memphis woman has been sentenced to federal prison for defrauding state and federal programs out of over \$560,000 intended to help people during the COVID-19 pandemic. D. Michael Dunavant, United States Attorney for the Western District of Tennessee, announced the sentence today.

**Karen Guevara, 38**, was sentenced on February 13, 2026 by Chief United States District Judge Sheryl H. Lipman to one year and a day of incarceration to be followed by three years of supervised release for conspiracy to commit wire fraud and making false claims against the United States government.

According to information presented in court, Guevara and her co-conspirators defrauded the United States government out of over \$560,000 by filing fraudulent applications for unemployment benefits in over 20 different states during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Tabor and her co-conspirators also defrauded the federally funded Tennessee Emergency Cash Assistance (ECA) program of approximately \$20,000 by creating fake employment termination notices for themselves and others. The ECA program was intended to provide financial assistance to individuals who had been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic because of lost employment.

Guevara was the third Memphis woman to be convicted and sentenced to federal prison for these schemes. Deashley Tabor, 37, was previously sentenced to 41 months. Rochelle Turner, 32, was previously sentenced to five months in prison to be followed by five months of home detention.

U.S. Attorney D. Michael Dunavant said: "Fraudulent schemes and crimes of dishonesty will be exposed and punished. This case represents our commitment to expose COVID-19 benefit fraud well beyond the pandemic, protect the integrity of the ECA program, hold offenders accountable for their dishonest criminal conduct, and to recover ill-gotten proceeds on behalf of victimized agencies."

"Karen Guevara enriched herself at taxpayers' expense by defrauding a program intended to aid American workers during a global pandemic when millions were displaced and out of work," said Anthony P. D'Esposito, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Labor. "My office remains committed to relentlessly protecting the integrity of the unemployment insurance program and will continue to pursue accountability."

"HHS-OIG, along with our law enforcement partners, is committed to safeguarding state and federal programs that are essential to helping those in need due to public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic," said Special Agent in Charge Kelly Blackmon of the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG). "This sentence sends a clear message that fraudsters who exploit these programs for personal gain will be held accountable."

"The Tennessee Department of Human Services works to provide essential services while safeguarding program integrity. In 2020, we launched emergency cash assistance during the pandemic and monitored closely to prevent fraud, waste and abuse. This is an example of our efforts, and we appreciate the partnership with HHS/OIG to pursue those who abused the program." –Todd McKinney, Inspector General, Tennessee Department of Human Services

The case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, and the Tennessee Department of Human Services.

The case was prosecuted on behalf of the government by Assistant U.S. Attorney Tony R. Arvin.

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