

PRESS RELEASE

Miami Woman Indicted on Federal Aggravated Identity Theft Charges

Friday, September 12, 2025

For Immediate Release

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

Defendant allegedly used victims' identities in unemployment insurance benefits scheme

Baltimore, Maryland – A federal grand jury returned an indictment charging a Miami woman with 16 federal charges in connection with an unemployment insurance (UI) benefits fraud scheme. Tamika Nicole Jones, 33, of Miami, Florida, is charged with eight counts of wire fraud, seven counts of aggravated identity theft, and one count of mail fraud. The indictment was unsealed following Jones's arrest in South Florida by Special Agents with the U.S. Department of Labor – Office of Inspector General (DOL-OIG).

Kelly O. Hayes, U.S. Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced the indictment with Special Agent in Charge Troy W. Springer, National Capital Region, DOL-OIG.

As detailed in the indictment, UI is a joint state and federal program that provided monetary benefits to eligible beneficiaries. UI payments are intended to provide temporary financial assistance to lawful workers who became unemployed through no fault of their own. Beginning in or around March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, several federal programs expanded UI eligibility and increased UI benefits. This included the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program, Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation, and the Lost Wages Assistance Program.

In Maryland, residents seeking UI benefits submitted online applications. Applicants answered specific questions to establish eligibility to receive UI benefits, including their name, Social Security Number (SSN), and mailing address, among other things. Additionally, the State required applicants to self-certify that they were unemployed, partially employed, or unable to work for a COVID-19-related reason. The Maryland Department of Labor (MD-DOL) relied upon the information from the application to determine UI benefits eligibility. After approval, the MD-DOL typically

distributed state and federal UI benefits electronically to a debit card, which claimants could use to withdraw funds and/or make purchases.

As alleged in the indictment, from May 2020 to June 2021, the defendant defrauded State Workforce Agencies, including the MD-DOL, by impersonating victim individuals for the purpose of submitting fraudulent claims for unemployment insurance. The defendant used victims' personal identifying information, including name, date of birth, and/or SSN, to submit applications for UI benefits.

If convicted, Jones faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison for wire and mail fraud. Aggravated identity theft carries a mandatory minimum sentence of two years in prison that runs consecutive to any other sentence.

Actual sentences for federal crimes are typically less than the maximum penalties. A federal district court judge determines sentencing after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

An indictment is not a finding of guilt. Individuals charged by indictment are presumed innocent until proven guilty at a later criminal proceeding.

The District of Maryland Strike Force is one of five strike forces established throughout the United States by the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate and prosecute COVID-19 fraud, including fraud relating to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The CARES Act was designed to provide emergency financial assistance to Americans suffering the economic effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The strike forces focus on large-scale, multi-state pandemic relief fraud perpetrated by criminal organizations and transnational actors. The strike forces are interagency law enforcement efforts, using prosecutor-led and data analyst-driven teams designed to identify and bring to justice those who stole pandemic relief funds.

For more information about the Department's response to the pandemic, visit justice.gov/coronavirus. Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form.

U.S. Attorney Hayes commended the DOL-OIG for its work in the investigation. Ms. Hayes also thanked Assistant U.S. Attorney Jared M. Beim who is prosecuting the federal case.

For more information about the Maryland U.S. Attorney's Office, its priorities, and resources available to report fraud, visit justice.gov/usao-md and justice.gov/usao-md/community-outreach.

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Updated September 12, 2025

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