PRESS RELEASE

Nigerian Citizen Sentenced for Unemployment Insurance Benefits Scam

Thursday, November 20, 2025

For Immediate Release
U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Maryland

Baltimore, Maryland – U.S. District Judge Stephanie A. Gallagher sentenced Temitope Bashua, 29, a citizen of Nigeria, to 30 months in prison, followed by two years of supervised release, for his role in a conspiracy and scheme to fraudulently obtain unemployment insurance (UI) benefits and Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL).

Kelly O. Hayes, U.S. Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced the sentence with Special Agent in Charge Troy W. Springer, National Capital Region, U.S. Department of Labor – Office of Inspector General (DOL-OIG), Acting Special Agent in Charge Evan Campanella, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) – Baltimore, and Joseph V. Cuffari Ph.D., Inspector General, Department of Homeland Security (DHS-OIG).

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act — a federal law enacted in March 2020 — provided emergency financial assistance to Americans suffering from the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Established by the CARES Act, the Paycheck Protection Program — administered through the Small Business Administration (SBA) — along with the EIDL, helped businesses meet their financial obligations. An EIDL advance does not have to be repaid, and small businesses can receive an advance, even if they are not approved for an EIDL loan. The maximum advance amount is $10,000.

According to his plea agreement, and other court documents, from May 2020 through September 2022, Bashua and others conspired to impersonate victims to obtain money by submitting fraudulent UI benefits claims. Bashua and his co-conspirators used the personally identifiable information (PII) without the victims' knowledge or consent, to submit fraudulent applications for UI benefits in Maryland and California.

Additionally, in October 2020, as a part of the conspiracy, co-conspirators submitted two fraudulent EIDL applications to the SBA for fictitious businesses using the PII of identity victims. As a result of the fraudulent EIDL applications, Bashua received more than

$290,000 in U.S. Treasury funds from the SBA. Bashua also admitted his involvement in other schemes, including cyber intrusion, romance fraud, and business email compromise fraud schemes.

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 CARES Act. 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 on the Department's response to the pandemic, please 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, HSI Baltimore, and DHS-OIG for their work in the investigation. Ms. Hayes also thanked Assistant U.S. Attorneys Philip Motsay and Bijon Mostoufi who prosecuted 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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