

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Eastern District of Pennsylvania

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, April 14, 2022

Philadelphia Man Sentenced to 6 1/2 Years in Prison for Stealing Nearly \$1 Million in PPP Funds

PHILADELPHIA – United States Attorney Jennifer Arbittier Williams announced that Devron Brown, 50, formerly of Philadelphia, PA, was sentenced to six years and six months in prison, five years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$939,350 restitution by United States District Court Judge Chad F. Kenney for his involvement in a scheme to unlawfully obtain and misuse loan proceeds offered through the federal Paycheck Protection Program (“PPP”).

In December 2021, the defendant pleaded guilty to eleven felony counts: two counts of bank fraud and attempted bank fraud, and nine counts of money laundering in connection with fraudulently obtaining approximately \$937,500 in PPP loan proceeds by making false representations regarding his alleged construction business, Just Us Construction, Inc. Brown made multiple false characterizations about the business, including the number of employees, the wages paid to them, the payroll taxes paid on those wages, and the intended use of the PPP loan proceeds. Brown then used those PPP loan proceeds for personal and unauthorized purchases, including a new residential property in Florida, a motorcycle, an all-terrain vehicle, a luxury automobile, and diamond jewelry. The defendant also caused a second fraudulent PPP loan application to be submitted for approximately the same amount in early 2021, but that application was denied.

“Paycheck Protection Program funds are intended to help American small-businesses continue paying their employees, even if revenues have dropped dramatically due to the pandemic,” said U.S. Attorney Williams. “Thieves who attempt to take these funds are taking advantage of others’ misfortune – ripping them off while also ripping off all taxpayers who fund the program. Here, the defendant fraudulently obtained nearly \$1 million in funds that could have helped struggling businesses and individuals, and instead spent the money on indulgences for himself.”

“Cars, diamond rings, a house — Devron Brown must’ve thought he hit the jackpot when he got that PPP money,” said Jacqueline Maguire, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI’s Philadelphia Division. “We’re talking about a program created to keep businesses and employees afloat amid a pandemic battering our economy. The FBI simply won’t stand for opportunists thinking they can defraud the federal government, live large, and get away with it. We will continue to aggressively pursue anyone foolish enough to do so.”

“Joseph Whitbeck, former Vice President of the National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 274, betrayed the trust of the members he served by engaging in a kickback scheme involving the solicitation of cash payments from letter carriers who he assisted in obtaining monetary grievance settlements from the United States Postal Service. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners and the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Labor-Management Standards to investigate union officials who exploit their members for personal benefit,” said Syreeta Scott, Special Agent-in-Charge, Philadelphia Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Federal Housing Finance Agency, Office of the Inspector General, with assistance from the United States Marshals Service, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Kathryn Deal.

Topic(s):

Financial Fraud

Component(s):

USAO - Pennsylvania, Eastern

Contact:

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