

**PRESS RELEASE**

# **Two Pennsylvania Men Charged With Defrauding Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program of Nearly \$220,000**

Tuesday, September 16, 2025

**For Immediate Release**

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Pennsylvania

## **One Defendant Allegedly Orchestrated Scheme While Incarcerated at State Correctional Facility**

PHILADELPHIA – United States Attorney David Metcalf announced that Alexander Daravina, aka Alexander Danazina and “Colombian Al,” 38, of Dallas, Pennsylvania, and Moses Benabe, 25, of Philadelphia, Pa., were charged by indictment with conspiracy to commit an offense against the United States, seven counts of wire fraud, and seven counts of aggravated identity theft, arising from a scheme to defraud the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (“PUA”) program of at least \$218,570.

The PUA program was established as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (“CARES”) Act, enacted in March 2020, and provided unemployment benefits to individuals not eligible for regular unemployment compensation or extended unemployment benefits. When PUA applications were approved, applicants were eligible to receive benefits via electronic funds transfer, or in a check or debit card mailed to the address on the application.

The indictment alleges that, from about July 2020 through September 2020, Daravina, while incarcerated at State Correctional Institution Phoenix (“SCI Phoenix”), obtained the personal identification information (“PII”), such as names, dates of birth, and social security numbers, of dozens of real people, including other inmates at the facility. Daravina then shared that PII with Benabe and others and directed them to apply for PUA benefits on behalf of those people, even though the defendants both knew that the individuals weren’t eligible for PUA benefits.

The indictment further alleges that Benabe used the PII provided, including the information of dozens of SCI Phoenix inmates, to fraudulently apply for PUA benefits.

When the applications were approved, Benabe had the debit cards sent to addresses under the control of members of the conspiracy. He and his co-conspirators then withdrew cash from ATMs and purchased items, using the fraudulently issued cards.

If convicted, the defendants each face a maximum possible sentence of 161 years' imprisonment, with a mandatory minimum of two years' imprisonment, three years of supervised release, and a \$3.75 million fine.

The case was investigated by the FBI and the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Mark Dubnoff.

The charges and allegations contained in the indictment are merely accusations. Every defendant is presumed to be innocent unless and until proven guilty in court.

**Contact**

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