

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Minnesota

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Two Women Charged with Wire Fraud for Stealing Millions
in COVID Relief Funds**

ST. PAUL, Minn. – Two women have been charged with engaging in fraud schemes to steal millions of dollars in COVID-19 relief funds, announced U.S. Attorney Andrew M. Luger.

According to court documents, beginning in June 2020, Tequisha Solomon, 39, of Las Vegas, and Takara Hughes, 35, of Maplewood, defrauded California's Employment Development Department (EDD) and Minnesota's Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and other state agencies, by submitting fraudulent claims and applications for unemployment benefits that were authorized to provide relief to the American workforce due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, while Solomon and Hughes resided in Nevada or Minnesota, they falsely claimed that they resided in Los Angeles or San Diego and worked as hairstylists in California. As a result, California's EDD paid Solomon at least \$37,000 and Hughes at least \$46,000 in unemployment benefits.

According to court documents, Solomon and Hughes also fraudulently applied for Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) and Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) small business loans, falsely claiming that they owned cleaning service businesses. As part of their fraud scheme, Solomon and Hughes submitted numerous fraudulent claims on behalf of other people and charged a fee for submitting those claims. In total, as a direct result of the material falsehoods and omissions, Solomon caused the United States and multiple state agencies to pay out at least \$4.1 million in fraudulent unemployment benefits and EIDL and PPP small business loan proceeds. Hughes is responsible for at least \$1.2 million in fraudulent benefits and loan proceeds.

Solomon is charged with six counts of wire fraud. In a separate indictment, Hughes is charged with five counts of wire fraud. The defendants are scheduled to make their initial appearances in U.S. District Court before Magistrate Judge Tony N. Leung on July 15, 2022.

This case is the result of an investigation conducted by the FBI, the U.S. Department of Labor-Office of Inspector General, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, with assistance from the St. Paul Police Department and the California Employment Development Department.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew S. Ebert is prosecuting the cases.

An indictment is merely an allegation and the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

Topic(s):
Coronavirus
Financial Fraud

Component(s):
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