

PRESS RELEASE

# U.S. Attorney's Office Secures Conviction in Unemployment Fraud Case

Monday, August 19, 2024

## For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of New Mexico

**ALBUQUERQUE** – An Albuquerque man pleaded guilty in federal court to mail and wire fraud charges stemming from a scheme exploiting CARES Act provisions.

According to publicly available court documents, between April 2020 and October 2020, **Pholopater Faltas**, 26, submitted fraudulent unemployment insurance applications to the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions in the names of at least eight individuals. To that end, **Faltas** solicited personally identifying information from these individuals, falsely promising to access benefits on their behalf. The fraudulent applications contained materially false statements to ensure approval and allowed **Faltas** to control the disbursed funds.

As a result of this scheme, the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions disbursed at least \$66,867 in unemployment benefits, which **Faltas** controlled through debit cards and bank accounts. **Faltas** misled the purported applicants about their eligibility and retained the majority of the funds for himself.

In his plea agreement, **Faltas** acknowledged that the offenses were related to the federal CARES Act, enacted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and involved the use of interstate mailings and wire communications.

The Court ordered that **Faltas** remain on conditions of release pending sentencing, which has not been scheduled.

At sentencing, **Faltas** faces up to 30 years in prison followed by to five years of supervised release and a fine not to exceed \$1 million.

U.S. Attorney Alexander M.M. Uballez made the announcement today.

The United States Secret Service - Albuquerque Resident Office and the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office investigated this case with assistance from the Department of Labor – Office of the Inspector General. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of New Mexico prosecuted the case.

[View the Plea Agreement](#)

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**Topic**

**FINANCIAL FRAUD**

**Component**

[USAO - New Mexico](#)

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