



Department of Justice

Acting United States Attorney Stephen R.
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Western District of Pennsylvania

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West Virginia Woman Pleads Guilty to Fraudulently Obtaining Pandemic Unemployment Benefits

PITTSBURGH, PA - A resident of Clarksburg, West Virginia, pleaded guilty in federal court to charges of fraud, Acting United States Attorney Stephen R. Kaufman announced today.

Christina Marie Weigner, age 48, of Clarksburg, WV 26301 pleaded guilty to one count before United States District Judge William S. Stickman

In connection with the guilty plea, the court was advised in June 2020, Weigner conspired to commit mail fraud in order to obtain pandemic unemployment assistance benefits.

On March 13, 2020, the President of the United States declared the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to be an emergency under Section 501(b) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Act. Subsequently, on March 27, 2020, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) was signed into law. The CARES Act created the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) Program, which provided unemployment benefits to individuals not eligible for regular unemployment compensation or extended unemployment benefits. The CARES Act also provided an emergency increase in unemployment compensation benefits of \$600.00 per week.

“The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program was designed solely to support the many individuals whose employment has been negatively affected by the effects of COVID-19,” said Acting U. S. Attorney Kaufman. “The U. S. Attorney’s Office will fully prosecute those who seek to abuse this program and fraudulently obtain benefits meant to help those financially impacted by the pandemic.”

“Christina Marie Weigner conspired with her incarcerated son to defraud the Pennsylvania Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program of benefits. Weigner fraudulently assumed her son’s identity to file a pandemic unemployment assistance claim. She subsequently submitted approximately 19 weekly certifications to the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry indicating her son was unemployed due to the COVID -19 pandemic and available for employment, all while her son was incarcerated at State Correctional Institution-Greene. The U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General and its partners at the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to protect benefits intended for individuals unemployed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic,” stated Syreeta Scott,

Acting Special Agent-in-Charge of the Philadelphia Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General.

Judge Stickman scheduled sentencing on October 25, 2021 at 10:30 a.m. The law provides for a maximum total sentence of not more than 5 years in prison, a fine of \$250,000 or both Under the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, the actual sentence imposed is based upon the seriousness of the offenses and the prior criminal history, if any, of the defendant.

Pending sentencing, the court continued Weigner on bond.

Assistant United States Attorney Brendan J. McKenna is prosecuting this case on behalf of the government.

The U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General conducted the investigation that led to the prosecution of Christina Marie Weigner.

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