

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Northern District of Indiana

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, August 24, 2021

East Chicago Woman Charged Wire Fraud

Related To COVID Cares Act Economic Injury Disaster Loan

HAMMOND- Natasha Weeks, age 29, of East Chicago, Indiana, has been charged by way of an Indictment with wire fraud, announced Acting U.S. Attorney Tina L. Nommay.

According to documents in this case, it is alleged that Ms. Weeks fraudulently obtained disaster-related benefits in the form of a Small Business Administration Economic Injury Disaster Loan (SBI-EIDL) by falsely claiming to be an Illinois business owner of a hair salon allegedly located in Chicago Heights, Illinois. It is alleged the business was called Weeks Hair Braiding/Weeks Hair Shop while no such business was found to have existed at the address identified on her application. The loan was applied for from an IP address in East Chicago, Indiana. It is alleged the application contained false statements and misrepresentations that the hair salon existed since 2017 and that Ms. Weeks owned the business since May 2020, employed 20 people and that her cost of goods sold was \$150,000. On July 7, 2020, Ms. Weeks received a \$10,000 SBA EIDL loan because of her application. Ms. Weeks is also charged with fraudulently seeking Arizona unemployment benefits despite never having lived or worked in that State.

The United States Attorney's Office emphasizes that an indictment is merely an allegation, and that all persons are presumed innocent until, and unless proven guilty in court.

If convicted, any specific sentence to be imposed will be determined by the Judge after a consideration of federal statutes and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines.

This case is being investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, US Department of Labor-Office of Inspector General and Homeland Security Investigations. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Diane Berkowitz.

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

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