

PRESS RELEASE

Federal Grand Jury Indicts Urbana, Illinois, Women for Wire Fraud Related to COVID Relief Funds

Thursday, March 9, 2023

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Central District of Illinois

URBANA, Ill. – A grand jury returned an indictment on March 8, 2023, against two Urbana, Illinois, women, Tasheena White, 32, of the 2400 block of Goodfield Drive, and Uniqua Whitaker, 26, of the 1200 block of Clifford Drive, charging each with one count of wire fraud related to Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans.

The indictment alleges that both White and Whitaker, United States Postal Service employees, engaged in a scheme to submit falsified loan applications and supporting documentation to acquire PPP loans in Spring 2021. White and Whitaker each obtained approximately \$20,000 in PPP loans funds. Both have been issued a summons to appear in federal court in Urbana.

If convicted, the statutory penalties for wire fraud are a maximum of 30 years' imprisonment, up to a three-year term of supervised release, up to a \$1,000,000 fine, and restitution.

Agencies participating in the investigation include the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Springfield Field Office; the United States Postal Inspection Service; the Small Business Administration Office of Inspector General; the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General; and the United States Postal Service Office of Inspector General. Assistant U.S. Attorney Nathan Bertrand is representing the government in the prosecution.

COVID-19 disaster relief benefits are intended to help people and businesses suffering as a result of the pandemic. If members of the public suspect that anyone fraudulently obtained or misused benefits, they should contact the National Center for Disaster Fraud (NDCF) Hotline at 1-866-720-5721 or submit the NDCF Web Complaint Form. The NDCF is a national coordinating agency within the Department of Justice's Criminal Division dedicated to improving the detection, prevention, investigation, and prosecution of criminal conduct related to natural and man-made disasters and other

emergencies, such as the coronavirus (COVID-19). Hotline staff will obtain information regarding complaints, which will then be reviewed by law enforcement officials. More information is available at <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud>.

Members of the public are reminded that an indictment is merely an accusation; the defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

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