

PRESS RELEASE

Former Inland Empire Nonprofit CEO Arrested on Indictment Alleging She Embezzled Federal Grant Funds for Wedding and Crypto

Tuesday, May 7, 2024

For Immediate Release

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

RIVERSIDE, California – The former CEO and executive director of two San Bernardino County nonprofit organizations was arrested today on an indictment alleging she embezzled federal grant money intended for the nonprofits, using more than \$225,000 of it for unauthorized expenditures such as wedding and travel expenses and cryptocurrency.

Donise Warren, 51, a.k.a. "Donise Warren-Jackson," "Donise Jackson," and "Donise Conerly," of Canyon Lake, is charged with 15 counts of embezzlement from organizations receiving federal funds and 15 counts of embezzlement of government property.

Each charge is a felony punishable by up to 10 years in federal prison. Warren was arraigned this afternoon in United States District Court in Riverside. She pleaded not guilty to the charges against her. A federal magistrate judge ordered her released on \$75,000 bond. Warren's trial is scheduled for July 1.

Warren was the president, CEO, and executive director of the Citadel Community Development Corporation (CCDC), whose stated mission was to assist at-risk individuals with accessing affordable housing, career services, and education services. Warren was also the president, CEO, and executive director of the Citadel Community Care Facility (CCCF), another nonprofit operating at the same location as CCDC.

According to the indictment, which a grand jury returned on May 1, Warren controlled CCDC from no later than March 2016 until at least October 2023. During that time, on CCDC's behalf, Warren applied for three grants from the United States Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOL-ETA). DOL-ETA awarded CCDC each of these grants, which required that the money be used on authorized expenditures. Warren allegedly embezzled approximately \$101,000 of CCDC's grant money and caused it to be used on wedding and travel expenses, including a \$25,000 payment to her spouse's personal credit card.

Warren controlled CCCF from at least March 2020 to approximately February 2023. During that time, on CCCF's behalf, Warren applied for a United States Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant. After CCCF was awarded the SAMHSA grant, Warren embezzled approximately \$127,500 of the grant money to her personal Coinbase account, where she purchased various cryptocurrencies.

An indictment contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

The United States Department of Labor Office of Inspector General and the United States Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General investigated this matter.

Assistant United States Attorney Cory L. Burluson of the Riverside Branch Office is prosecuting this case.

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