

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Massachusetts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, August 30, 2021

Former Department of Unemployment Assistance Employee Pleads Guilty to Fraud and Identity Theft Charges Related to COVID-19 Pandemic

BOSTON – A former employee of the Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) pleaded guilty today to fraud and identity theft charges arising from her claims for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) funds.

Tiffany Pacheco, a/k/a Tiffany Tavery, 35, formerly of New Bedford, pleaded guilty to six counts of wire fraud, one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and one count of aggravated identity theft. U.S. District Court Judge Indira Talwani scheduled sentencing for Jan. 12, 2022. She was indicted in January 2021 along with her husband, [Arthur Pacheco](#), who pleaded guilty in July 2021 and is scheduled to be sentenced on Nov. 18, 2021.

Tiffany Pacheco was hired by the DUA in April 2020, shortly after her release from federal prison following a conviction for aggravated identity theft. While employed by DUA, Tiffany Pacheco misused her position to submit fraudulent PUA claim information on behalf of herself and Arthur Pacheco, who was incarcerated in Texas until Sept. 4, 2020, and thus ineligible for PUA funds.

Specifically, in June 2020, PUA claims submitted for Tiffany Pacheco and her husband reflected 2019 income of \$0 and no dependents. In July 2020, via her employment with DUA, Tiffany Pacheco obtained access to the PUA computer system, and later changed claim information for herself and Arthur Pacheco in order to increase the amount of PUA funds they would receive. For example, Tiffany Pacheco increased the amount of 2019 income for her and Arthur Pacheco to more than \$240,000 and increased the number of their dependents to seven. Tiffany Pacheco further used her access to the PUA system to verify the increased 2019 income on both claims without the required income verification documents.

In November 2020, Arthur Pacheco called DUA and falsely denied that he had been incarcerated during the timeframe leading up to September 2020, and that he was only incarcerated for approximately one month. Tiffany Pacheco also spoke with DUA and misrepresented the period of time in which Arthur Pacheco had been incarcerated.

A search of the New Bedford apartment where Tiffany and Arthur Pacheco resided uncovered various tools of identity fraud, including an ID laminator, 100 blank ID cards, 68 hologram overlays, 150 card lamination sheets and 649 sheets of blank checks. Law enforcement also seized approximately \$17,000 cash and a notebook that appeared to contain the personal identifying information of various individuals. In addition, a driver's license recovered during the search matched the name of a victim Tiffany Pacheco used to submit another fraudulent PUA claim. On Sept. 23, 2020, DUA terminated Tiffany Pacheco's employment.

The charges of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and wire fraud provide for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, up to three years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. The charge of aggravated identity theft provides for a sentence of up to two years in prison, one year of supervised

release and a fine of \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

The investigation was conducted by Homeland Security's Investigation's Document and Benefit Fraud Task Force (DBFTF), a specialized field investigative group comprised of personnel from various local, state, and federal agencies with expertise in detecting, deterring, and disrupting organizations and individuals involved in various types of document, identity, and benefit fraud schemes.

Acting United States Attorney Nathaniel R. Mendell; Matthew B. Millhollin, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Boston; and Nikitas Splagounias, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigation made the announcement. The New Bedford Police Department, Massachusetts Parole Board and Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance, Program Integrity Unit provided valuable assistance with the investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorney William Abely, Chief of Mendell's Criminal Division and Assistant U.S. Attorney Dustin Chao, Chief of Mendell's Public Corruption and Special Prosecutions Unit, are prosecuting the case.

Topic(s):
Coronavirus
Financial Fraud
Identity Theft

Component(s):
[USAO - Massachusetts](#)