

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Southern District of Ohio

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Local alleged drug dealers also charged with falsely obtaining tens of thousands of dollars through Pandemic Unemployment Assistance

COLUMBUS, Ohio – A federal grand jury has charged four Central Ohioans in a narcotics conspiracy involving bulk quantities of fentanyl, crack, cocaine and methamphetamine. Three of the four defendants have also been charged federally in a mail and wire fraud conspiracy related to illegally receiving Pandemic Unemployment Assistance.

Ricco Lamonte Maye, 38, of Columbus, was originally charged by indictment in November 2020 and has remained in federal custody since.

Airrika N. Anthony, 32, Nicole L. Groves, 31, and Kevin E. Pearson, 57, all of Columbus, are charged along with Maye in the superseding indictment returned Feb. 25. Maye, Anthony and Groves are charged in the fraudulent unemployment assistance conspiracy.

According to court documents, beginning in 2018, the four defendants conspired to, possessed and distributed 400 grams or more of fentanyl, 500 grams or more of cocaine, 280 grams of crack and five grams of methamphetamine.

It is also alleged Maye, Anthony and Groves fraudulently filed for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance. Maye received \$7,400 from the state of Ohio and \$10,000 from Michigan. In his applications, he allegedly claimed he was unemployed due to the coronavirus pandemic and in one application falsely claimed he lived in Michigan.

Anthony received \$13,900 after allegedly falsely claiming she was unable to reach her place of employment due to a COVID-19 quarantine.

The superseding indictment details that Groves claimed to be unemployed because she is the primary caretaker of a child who was unable to attend school because of the coronavirus. The superseding indictment says Groves was actually employed and earned income at the time she received \$11,800 in assistance funds.

Maye, Anthony and Groves allegedly used the personal information of other individuals to apply for additional pandemic assistance funds. Maye received all or a portion of the others' benefits.

The drug conspiracy charged in this case is punishable by a minimum of 10 years and up to life in prison. Conspiracy to commit wire and mail fraud is punishable by up to 20 years in prison.

Vipal J. Patel, Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio; Roland Herndon, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF); Chris Hoffman, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Cincinnati Division; the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General and Interim Columbus Police Chief Michael Woods announced the charges. Assistant United States Attorneys Kevin W. Kelley and Heather A. Hill are representing the United States in this case.

An indictment is merely an allegation, and defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law.

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Topic(s):

Coronavirus
Drug Trafficking

Component(s):

[USAO - Ohio, Southern](#)

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