

**Department of Justice**  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Northern District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, November 3, 2022

## **Long Island Woman Sentenced to Prison for Unemployment Insurance Fraud**

ALBANY, NEW YORK – Rhasha Wright, age 30, of Roosevelt, New York, was sentenced today to 24 months and a day in prison for scheming with New York State prisoners to defraud pandemic-related unemployment insurance programs.

The announcement was made by United States Attorney Carla B. Freedman; Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge, New York Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (USDOL-OIG); Matthew Scarpino, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Buffalo Field Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI); Ketty Larco-Ward, Inspector in Charge of the Boston Division of the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS); Anthony J. Annucci, Acting Commissioner of the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (NYSDOCCS); and Roberta Reardon, Commissioner of the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL).

Wright previously pled guilty to conspiracy to commit mail fraud and aggravated identity theft. She admitted to conspiring with co-defendants Reginald Thornton and Lord Paulin, two inmates at the Bare Hill Correctional Facility in Malone, New York, to defraud the NYSDOL by submitting false unemployment insurance claims to NYSDOL in Paulin's name and in the name of another Bare Hill prisoner. Prisoners were not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits.

United States District Judge Glenn T. Suddaby also sentenced Wright to serve 1 year of post-release supervision and ordered her to pay \$11,696 in restitution to the State of New York..

[Thornton previously pled guilty to participating in two prison-based unemployment insurance fraud conspiracies and was sentenced to 51 months in federal prison, to be served after his state prison term ends. Paulin was sentenced to 19 months in federal prison, to be served after his state sentence ends.](#) A fourth defendant, [Briana Garland, previously pled guilty to conspiring with Thornton to submit a fraudulent claim in Thornton's name](#) and is awaiting sentencing.

The cases were investigated by USDOL-OIG, HSI, USPIS, and the Offices of Special Investigations of NYSDOCCS and NYSDOL. The cases were prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Joshua R. Rosenthal.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with agencies across government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The Task Force bolsters efforts to investigate and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programs to prevent fraud by, among other methods, augmenting and incorporating existing coordination mechanisms, identifying resources and techniques to uncover fraudulent actors and their schemes, and sharing and harnessing information and insights gained from prior enforcement efforts. For more information on the Department's response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>.

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>.

**Topic(s):**

Coronavirus  
Financial Fraud

**Component(s):**

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