

**PRESS RELEASE**

# **Malden Woman Sentenced to Prison for Fraudulently Obtaining Over \$100,000 in COVID-Relief Funds**

Monday, February 3, 2025

**For Immediate Release**

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Massachusetts

BOSTON – A Malden woman was sentenced today for fraudulently obtaining over \$100,000 from the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program made available under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act.

Teshawnda Knight, 41, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Allison D. Burroughs to 18 months in prison, to be followed by three years of supervised release. Knight was also ordered to pay \$105,250 in restitution and forfeiture. In July 2024, Knight pleaded guilty to one count of wire fraud. Knight was arrested in February 2024 along with over 40 Heath Street Gang member/associates, who were charged with racketeering conspiracy, drug trafficking, firearms charges and financial frauds, including COVID-related fraud.

Starting in April 2020 and continuing through August 2021, Knight submitted three PUA applications and related weekly certifications that contained false information and fraudulent documents – two in Massachusetts and one in Indiana – and received a total of \$105,250 in fraudulently obtained PUA benefits.

United States Attorney Leah B. Foley; Boston Police Commissioner Michael Cox; and Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge of Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney Sarah Hoefle of the Criminal Division prosecuted the case.

This effort is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

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 via the [NCDF Web Complaint Form](#).

*Updated February 3, 2025*

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