

PRESS RELEASE

Owner of Boston Area Pizzerias Pleads Guilty to Defrauding U.S. Small Business Administration

Tuesday, February 25, 2025

For Immediate Release

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

BOSTON – The owner of Stash’s Pizza has pleaded guilty to submitting false information to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to obtain a loan on behalf of a business he no longer owned.

Stavros Papantoniadis, a/k/a “Steve Papantoniadis,” 49, of Westwood, pleaded guilty to a Superseding Information charging one count of false statements. U.S. District Judge Angel Kelley scheduled sentencing for April 2, 2025. Papantoniadis has remained in custody since his arrest on March 16, 2023.

Papantoniadis is the owner and operator of Stash’s Pizza, a chain of pizzerias in greater Boston. In April 2021, Papantoniadis sold one of his pizzerias located in Randolph, Mass., and the Secretary of State subsequently cancelled the limited liability company through which Papantoniadis owned the Randolph pizzeria.

Between November 2021 and January 2022, Papantoniadis applied for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan from the SBA. These loans were designed to provide relief for existing small businesses that suffered substantial economic injury during the COVID-19 pandemic. In his submissions to the SBA, Papantoniadis falsely stated that he still owned and operated the pizzeria in Randolph, even claiming that he then had 18 employees at the location. However, in reality, Papantoniadis had sold the business several months before he applied for the loan. Based on Papantoniadis’ false representations, the SBA approved the loan and sent Papantoniadis \$499,900.

In June 2024, Papantoniadis was convicted by a federal jury of three counts of forced labor and three counts of attempted forced labor. Based on evidence introduced at trial, Papantoniadis forced or attempted to force five men and one woman to work for him through violent physical abuse, threats of abuse and repeated threats to report victims

to immigration authorities to have them deported. In October 2024, he was sentenced to 102 months in prison, one year of supervised release and ordered to pay a \$35,000 fine.

The false statement charge provides for a sentence of up to five years in prison, up to three years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

U.S. Attorney Leah B. Foley; Michael J. Krol, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in New England; and Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Northeast Region made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Timothy E. Moran, Chief of the Organized Crime & Gang Unit and Brian A. Fogerty of the Human Trafficking & Civil Rights Unit are prosecuting the case.

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 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> and <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus/combatingfraud>.

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](#).

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