

**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Rhode Island

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, February 2, 2022

## **Providence Man Awaits Sentencing for Fraudulently Applying for COVID Unemployment Benefits**

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – A Providence man has admitted in federal court to fraudulently filing applications with five states for unemployment benefits provided for by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program, announced United States Attorney Zachary A. Cunha and Rhode Island Attorney General Peter F. Neronha.

Keishon Brown 33, pled guilty on Tuesday to wire fraud. He is scheduled to be sentenced on April 26, 2022.

According to charging documents, beginning in May 2020, Brown, who worked in Rhode Island, submitted fraudulent online applications with unemployment agencies in Massachusetts, Arizona, Nevada, Virginia, and California for pandemic-related unemployment benefits under the CARES Act PUA Program. In his applications, Brown claimed that he was unemployed, but that he had previously worked in each of those states, when in fact he had not. Brown collected a total of \$62,084 in benefits that he was not entitled to receive.

This case, as well as other instances of criminal activity related to fraudulent applications for pandemic-related unemployment insurance benefits are being investigated jointly by the FBI, the Rhode Island State Police, and the U.S. Department of Labor – Office of Inspector General. Cases are jointly reviewed, charged, and prosecuted by a team of prosecutors that include Assistant U.S. Attorneys Denise M. Barton, Stacey P. Veroni, and G. Michael Seaman, and Rhode Island Assistant Attorney General John M. Moreira, chief of the Rhode Island Attorney General's Public Integrity Unit.

Rhode Islanders who believe their personal identification has been stolen and used to fraudulently obtain unemployment benefits are urged to contact the Rhode Island State Police at [financialcrimes@risp.gov](mailto:financialcrimes@risp.gov) or the FBI Providence office at (401) 272-8310.

On May 17, 2021, the United States 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>.

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**Topic(s):**

Coronavirus  
Financial Fraud

**Component(s):**

[Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](#)  
[USAO - Rhode Island](#)

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