

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, January 4, 2023

## **Queens Man Sentenced to 39 Months for Pandemic-Related Fraud**

ALBANY, NEW YORK – Melvin Ansong, age 27, of Corona, New York, was sentenced today to 39 months in prison for mail fraud, wire fraud and aggravated identity theft in connection with schemes in which he obtained more than \$190,000 in unemployment insurance benefits and government-backed loans meant to provide relief from the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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, Special Agent in Charge of the Buffalo Field Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI); and Ketty Larco-Ward, Inspector in Charge of the Boston Division of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS).

As part of his July 25, 2021 guilty plea, Ansong admitted that he fraudulently obtained \$165,182 in unemployment insurance benefits from the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) in the names of 13 other people and an additional \$18,480 in benefits from the Arizona Department of Economic Security in the name of another person. Ansong further admitted that he fraudulently obtained an \$8,000 Economic Injury Disaster Loan from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) by claiming that he owned a pet grooming company when in fact no such company existed. United States District Judge Mae A. D'Agostino also sentenced Ansong to 1 year of supervised release, to begin following his term of imprisonment, and ordered him to pay restitution in the amounts of \$165,182 to the State of New York, \$18,480 to the State of Arizona, and \$8,000 to the SBA.

The case was investigated by USDOL-OIG, USPIS, and HSI, with assistance from U.S. Customs and Border Protection's New York Field Office and the NYSDOL's Office of Special Investigations. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Alexander P. Wentworth-Ping and 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  
Identity Theft

**Component(s):**

USAO - New York, Northern