

**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

Southern District of New York

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, September 15, 2020

## **Two Individuals Charged With Fraudulently Filing For Unemployment Insurance**

Audrey Strauss, Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Michael C. Mikulka, Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Regional Office of the Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General ("DOL-OIG"), Patrick J. Freaney, Deputy Special Agent in Charge of the New York Field Office of the United States Secret Service ("Secret Service"), and Roberta Reardon, Commissioner of the New York Department of Labor, announced today the unsealing of a Complaint charging CHRISTOPHER FERRERA and ASHLEY BOURDIER with operating a scheme to fraudulently file for unemployment insurance under the names of other people. FERRERA and BOURDIER were arrested this morning and will be presented and arraigned later today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Katharine H. Parker.

Acting U.S. Attorney Audrey Strauss said: "As alleged, Christopher Ferrera and Ashley Bourdier fraudulently applied for and received unemployment benefits by using the identities of other people. Thanks to the work of our law enforcement partners, the defendants are now facing prosecution for their alleged crimes."

DOL-OIG Special Agent-in-Charge Michael C. Mikulka said: "Investigating fraud involving the Unemployment Insurance Program is an important part of the mission of the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, particularly now when our nation is providing billions of dollars in unemployment benefits to American workers in need due to the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to vigorously investigate unemployment insurance fraud."

Secret Service Deputy Special Agent in Charge Patrick J. Freaney said: "The U.S. Secret Service remains dedicated to working with our partners in combatting identity theft and financial fraud. These alleged criminal actions have a lasting effect on the victims by undermining their most basic sense of security by stealing their identities to perpetrate financial crimes. I would like to commend the investigative efforts of the New York Department of Labor and the Office of the Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Labor in working with the U.S. Secret Service in bringing today's charges."

New York Department of Labor Commissioner Roberta Reardon said: "Unemployment Insurance fraud is something that we fight every day. However, for these criminals to use a pandemic for their personal gain while millions of New Yorkers legitimately need this assistance is even more despicable. I applaud the work of all of our law enforcement partners including the Office of the Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Secret Service for helping to keep money out of the hands of these thieves. We will continue to work with them to combat unemployment insurance fraud and hold these criminals accountable."

As alleged in the Complaint unsealed today in Manhattan federal court<sup>[1]</sup>:

From March 2020 through August 2020, CHRISTOPHER FERRERA and ASHLEY BOURDIER engaged in a scheme to obtain unemployment insurance by fraudulently filing for benefits using the

names and social security numbers of more than 25 other people. As a result of their scheme, FERRERA and BOURDIER received over \$200,000 of unemployment insurance benefits from at least three different states.

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FERRERA, 25, of the Bronx, New York, and BOURDIER, 27, of New York, New York, are each charged with conspiring to commit wire fraud, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. FERRERA is also charged with aggravated identity theft, which carries a mandatory two-year consecutive sentence. The maximum potential sentences in this case are prescribed by Congress and are provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendants will be determined by the judge.

Ms. Strauss praised the work of DOL-OIG, the Secret Service, and the New York Department of Labor.

This case is being handled by the Office's General Crimes Unit. Assistant United States Attorney Thomas S. Burnett is charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Complaint are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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[1] As the introductory phrase signifies, the entirety of the text of the Complaint and the description of the Complaint set forth below constitute only allegations, and every fact described should be treated as an allegation.