

PRESS RELEASE

Serial Fraudster Sentenced to 84 Months in Prison for Multiple Fraud Schemes Totaling Over \$2 Million

Monday, May 6, 2024

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of New Hampshire

CONCORD – A Hampton man was sentenced today in federal court for multiple fraud schemes, U.S. Attorney Jane E. Young announces.

Anthony Silva, 39, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Samantha D. Elliott to 84 months in prison and 3 years of supervised release. On February 15, 2024, Silva pleaded guilty to three counts of wire fraud, one count of mail fraud, and one count of aggravated identity theft. Silva was ordered to pay restitution, and forfeit funds held at Citizens Bank, Stride Bank, Fidelity, Green Dot, PNC Bank, Bancorp, and TD Bank totaling approximately \$830,000.

“The defendant is a serial fraudster who used dozens of stolen identities to enrich himself,” said U.S. Attorney Young. “He did not merely steal funds from state and federal governments. Rather, he fleeced pools of funds which were designed specifically to serve as a lifeline to millions of Americans during the worst public health crisis in a century. I thank our law enforcement partners for their diligent work in unraveling the defendant’s sophisticated fraud schemes.”

“Anthony Silva collected over a million dollars to which he knew he wasn’t entitled. This repeat fraudster stole the identities of dozens of victims and blatantly defrauded government programs meant to keep small businesses and workers afloat,” said Jodi Cohen, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI’s Boston Division. “Today’s sentence makes it clear that defrauding the government is a bad idea, and the FBI and our partners will continue to pursue anyone bold enough, and foolish enough, to do so.”

"Today's sentencing should give fair warning that the U.S. Postal Inspection Service will aggressively investigate and seek prosecution of individuals like Anthony Silva, who swindled over a million dollars from funds that were designated to support fellow Americans and small businesses during the pandemic," said Ketty Larco-Ward, Inspector in Charge of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Boston Division. "Postal Inspectors, alongside our federal law enforcement partners, uncovered the elaborate fraud schemes employed by Silva to conceal his activities and line his pockets. We will continue to support and collaborate with our federal law enforcement partners to stop those who are engaged in these types of schemes."

"Anthony Silva defrauded the Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance and the Vermont Department of Labor by using stolen identities to obtain unemployment insurance (UI) benefits. Today's sentencing affirms the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General's commitment to working with our law enforcement partners to safeguard Department of Labor programs designed to help those who struggled during the COVID-19 pandemic," said Special Agent-in-Charge Jonathan Mellone, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

Silva orchestrated four separate fraud schemes using stolen identities. Specifically, Silva used stolen names, dates of birth, Social Security Numbers, and other identifiers to fraudulently obtain (1) unemployment insurance benefits from Vermont, (2) unemployment insurance benefits from Massachusetts, (3) American Express credit cards, and (4) CARES Act funds. The fraudulently obtained unemployment benefits and CARES Act funds were deposited either by check or direct deposit into dozens of accounts Silva controlled at multiple banks. Many of these accounts were in the names of individual victims or fictional organizations, such as the "Peaceful Protesters Bail Fund," "BLM New England Trust," and "Anti-Drumpf League."

Silva obtained more than \$450,000 from Vermont, over \$175,000 from Massachusetts, and \$600,000 from the U.S. Small Business Administration. In addition, the fraudulently-obtained credit cards were used to make over \$50,000 in purchases from retailers such as Victoria's Secret, Home Depot, and Walmart. Silva also unsuccessfully attempted to obtain additional CARES Act funds. The total intended loss was approximately \$2.1 million, and the actual loss was approximately \$1.2 million.

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Labor's Office of the Inspector General, and the United States Secret Service led the investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Alexander S. Chen and John J. Kennedy prosecuted the case.

During the early part of the coronavirus pandemic, Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The CARES Act included multiple relief provisions to help the millions of Americans and many small businesses adversely affected by the pandemic, including the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). Private lenders could participate in the PPP. The loans, which were supposed to be used for payroll, were fully guaranteed by the government. If borrowers used the PPP loans for payroll and other approved expenses as intended, they could apply for loan forgiveness. The CARES Act also opened up the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program. As with PPP loans, EIDL loans were supposed to be used for payroll and other business expenses such as rent and mortgage.

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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Updated May 6, 2024

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