



Department of Justice

BRIDGET M. BRENNAN
ACTING UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 26, 2021

Thomas Weldon
Thomas.Weldon@usdoj.gov
(216) 622-3651

Seven Individuals Indicted for Fraudulently Obtaining Pandemic Unemployment Insurance Benefits

Cleveland, Ohio – Acting U.S. Attorney Bridget M. Brennan announced today that a federal grand jury sitting in the Northern District of Ohio returned an indictment charging seven Cleveland area individuals for their roles in unlawful obtaining Coronavirus pandemic unemployment insurance benefits.

According to court documents, the following individuals have been indicted on charges of Mail Fraud and Conspiracy to Commit Mail Fraud and Wire Fraud: Lawrence Lawson, 41, Cleveland, Ohio; Cierra Clifton, 38, Willowick, Ohio; Emanuel Smith, 49, Cleveland, Ohio; Terrance Jones, 27, Cleveland, Ohio; Quantez Lawson, 29, Cleveland, Ohio; Charles Moore, 35, Cleveland, Ohio; Mark Dailey, 54, Cleveland, Ohio.

According to the indictment, from on or about May 17, 2020, through on or about November 13, 2020, the charged individuals conspired to submit fraudulent unemployment applications to obtain pandemic unemployment insurance benefits to which they were not entitled. The applications were subsequently processed and the defendants received debit cards in the mail pre-loaded with pandemic unemployment insurance benefits. The benefits fraudulently paid out as a result of defendants' scheme totaled over \$290,000.

Acting U.S. Attorney Bridget M. Brennan stated, "This indictment represents the Department of Justice's commitment to prosecute those who are alleged to have fraudulently obtained government benefits to which they were not entitled."

Irene Lindow, Special Agent-in-Charge, Chicago Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General stated, "An important mission of the Office of Inspector General is to investigate allegations of unemployment insurance fraud. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to investigate these types of allegations."

"This indictment represents our continuing resolve to root out fraud and corruption in all forms, and demand integrity of those entrusted to carry out government programs," said HUD OIG Special Agent in Charge Michael Powell. "It is our continuing core mission to work with our law

enforcement partners and the United States Attorney's Office to protect our housing programs and to take strong action against those who seek to illegally benefit from them."

FBI Special Agent in Charge Eric Smith stated, "These individuals are believed to have engaged in fraud in order to financially enrich themselves. Anytime fraud is committed using a government funded program all tax paying citizens are victims. The FBI will continue to work with our partners to ensure fraud is uncovered and dealt with in a court of law."

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. Each defendant is entitled to a fair trial in which it will be the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

If convicted, the defendants' sentences will be determined by the Court after review of factors unique to this case, including each defendant's prior criminal record, if any, the defendant's role in the offense, and the characteristics of the violation. In all cases, the sentence imposed will not exceed the statutory maximum and in most cases it will be less than the maximum.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Labor-Office of Inspector General, and the U.S. Housing and Urban Development-Office of Inspector General conducted the investigation. Assistant United States Attorneys Megan R. Miller and Erica D. Barnhill are prosecuting the case.

If you believe you've been a victim of unemployment insurance fraud, please report the matter to the National Center for Disaster Fraud by calling (866) 720-5721 or visiting www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud.

###