

PRESS RELEASE

Suffolk County Corrections Officers Charged with COVID Unemployment and Loan Fraud

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For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Massachusetts

BOSTON – Two corrections officers employed by the Suffolk County Sherriff's Department were arrested today for allegedly submitting fraudulent information in an effort to obtain loans through CARES Act programs like the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program and the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).

Christnel Orisca, 25, of Boston, was indicted by a federal grand jury on five counts of wire fraud and one count of making a false statement to a financial institution, arising out of PUA, traditional Unemployment Insurance (UI) and PPP loan benefits obtained prior to his employment at the Suffolk County Sherriff's Department. Jasmine Murphy, 38, also of Boston, was indicted on seven counts of wire fraud and one count of making a false statement to a financial institution, arising out of PUA and PPP loan benefits obtained prior to her employment at the Suffolk County Sherriff's Department and UI benefits obtained prior to and during her employment there.

The defendants were arrested this morning and will appear in federal court in Boston at 1:30 PM and 1:45 PM today.

“This case highlights the critical importance of protecting taxpayer-funded programs like the CARES Act from fraud and abuse,” said United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy. “These defendants, who hold positions of public trust as corrections officers, are alleged to have knowingly exploited pandemic relief programs intended to support small businesses and unemployed workers during a time of unprecedented crisis. Such conduct not only undermines the integrity of these programs but also betrays the public’s trust. My

office remains steadfast in holding accountable those who engage in such schemes and ensuring that federal relief funds are used for their intended purpose – helping those in genuine need.”

“An important part of the mission of the Office of Inspector General is to investigate allegations of fraud involving COVID-19 pandemic unemployment insurance programs. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to investigate these types of allegations,” said Special Agent-in-Charge Jonathan Mellone, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

“Today’s arrest sends a clear message that those seeking to fraudulently receive benefits will be investigated and prosecuted. DHS OIG is grateful for our continued partnership with our law enforcement partners as we continue fighting corruption,” said Inspector General Joseph V. Cuffari, Ph.D., U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General.

According to the charging document, Orisca has been a Corrections Officer with the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department since late 2021. It is alleged that Orisca fraudulently applied for pandemic unemployment and small business loan benefits while working full-time, initially for a security company and later for a delivery company. While employed full-time, it is alleged that Orisca collected approximately \$54,700 in unemployment benefits and small business loan funds.

According to the indictment, Murphy has been a Corrections Officer with the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department since approximately January 2022. It is alleged that Murphy fraudulently applied for pandemic unemployment and small business loan benefits while working for trucking and workforce services companies. It is alleged that Murphy collected approximately \$44,346 in unemployment benefits and small business loan funds to which she was not entitled.

In both of their PUA applications, it is alleged that Orisca and Murphy made fraudulent representations about their employment status and thereafter falsely claimed, on a weekly basis, that they did not work and did not receive any income during the prior week. In their PPP loan applications, it is alleged that Orisca and Murphy submitted false statements to SBA-approved lenders, including about the income and/or payroll of their purported small businesses, in order to obtain their loans. According to the charging documents, they also made false representations on forms submitted to request that their PPP loans be forgiven.

The charge of wire fraud provides for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release and a \$250,000 fine. The charge of making false statements to a financial institution provides for a sentence of up to 30 years in prison, five years of supervised release and a \$1 million fine. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

U.S. Attorney Levy, DOL-OIG SAC Mellone and DHS-OIG Inspector General Cuffari made the announcement today. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Boston Police Department and the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department provided valuable assistance with the investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Adam Deitch and Dustin Chao of the Public Corruption Unit are prosecuting the case.

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 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> and <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus/combatingfraud>.

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 via the <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/webform/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

The details contained in the charging document are allegations. The defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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