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**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

Western District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, June 8, 2022

## **Batavia Woman Pleads Guilty To COVID Fraud**

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ROCHESTER, N.Y.-U.S. Attorney Trini E. Ross announced today that Danielle Tooley, 37, of Batavia, NY, pleaded guilty to wire fraud before Chief U.S. District Judge Elizabeth A. Wolford. The charge carries a maximum penalty of 30 years in prison and a \$1,000,000 fine.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Kyle P. Rossi, who is handling the case, stated that between July 9 and December 4, 2020, Tooley applied for and collected unemployment benefits to which she was not entitled, benefits that were connected to federal COVID-19 relief programs. The scheme came to the attention of law enforcement on November 24, 2020, when Tooley was arrested for criminal possession of a controlled substance during a vehicle traffic stop on Clinton Street in Bergen, NY. A New York State Police trooper observed a crack pipe with white residue inside Tooley's vehicle. Tooley admitted at the time that she had crack cocaine in the center console of the vehicle. As they prepared for Tooley's vehicle to be towed, troopers recovered six New York State unemployment benefit cards issued to individuals other than Tooley, which they turned over to the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General. Subsequent investigation determined that Tooley consistently withdrew money from bank accounts associated with the benefit cards.

The plea is the result of an investigation by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations – Labor Racketeering and Fraud, New York Region, under the direction of Special Agent-in-Charge Jonathan Mellone; the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Acting Special Agent-in-Charge Todd Allen; the U.S. Secret Service, under the direction of Special Agent-in-Charge Jeffrey Burr; the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent-in-Charge Sharon B. MacDermott; and the New York State Police, under the direction of Major Barry Chase.

Sentencing is scheduled for August 17, 2022, at 3:30 p.m. before Judge Wolford.

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**Topic(s):**

Coronavirus

**Component(s):**

USAO - New York, Western

Updated June 8, 2022