

# Virginia Beach Woman Pleads Guilty to Unemployment Insurance Fraud Scheme Totaling More than \$800,000

Wednesday, July 19, 2023

**For Immediate Release**

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Virginia

NORFOLK, Va. – A Virginia Beach woman pleaded guilty today to fraudulently obtaining unemployment insurance (UI) benefits using personal identifiable information (PII) belonging to both Virginia Department of Corrections inmates and unwitting victims from the Norfolk area and out of state.

According to court documents, from approximately May 2020 through in November 2020, Jenyce Williams, 34, and her co-defendants and co-conspirators conspired to use PII, including names, dates of birth, and social security numbers belonging to others to file hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of UI claims amid the pandemic when numerous businesses were shut down. Williams' role in the conspiracy was to submit UI applications and complete weekly recertifications using PII provided either by one of her co-conspirators, a Virginia Department of Corrections inmate, or obtained using other sources. For the UI applications to be successful, Williams and a second co-conspirator provided numerous false inputs in required fields on the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) website, including a false mailing address, telephone number, e-mail address, and last employer. Williams and her second co-conspirator repeated false recertifications on a weekly basis to ensure benefits would continue to be paid. For many of the inmate claims, Williams continued weekly recertifications through in or about December 2020 until the VEC cut off known inmate claims. Williams elected for most of the UI benefits to be paid through a preloaded Way2Go debit card, which was mailed to the mailing address listed on the application, which was either Williams' address, a co-conspirator's address, or other residences selected to avoid suspicion regarding too many cards going to one address. The false claims filed specifically by Williams for 12 inmates resulted in the approval of approximately \$193,332 in UI benefits. As a result of the overall conspiracy, the VEC approved approximately \$478,640 in UI benefits on behalf of Virginia Department of Corrections inmates who were not entitled to receive such benefits, in addition to two non-inmates who had former connections to the Virginia Department of Corrections.

Williams also used another source available to members of the conspiracy to obtain PII belonging to individuals out of state who were not incarcerated. Using this PII, Williams filed approximately 15 claims, resulting in the approval of approximately \$361,664 in UI benefits. These innocent out-of-state victims did not provide their PII to Williams or any of her co-defendants and had no knowledge of the scheme.

Williams is scheduled to be sentenced on November 3. She faces a maximum penalty of 30 years in prison. Actual sentences for federal crimes are typically less than the maximum penalties. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after taking into account the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Jessica D. Aber, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia; Joseph V. Cuffari, Inspector General for the Department of Homeland Security; Troy W. Springer, Acting Special Agent in Charge, National Capital Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; and Damon E. Wood, Inspector in Charge of the Washington Division of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service made the announcement after U.S. Magistrate Judge Lawrence R. Leonard accepted the plea.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Kristen Taylor is prosecuting the case.