



THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Rhode Island

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, March 2, 2022

Woman Previously Convicted in Fraud Scheme Admits to Defrauding the Federal Housing Administration, Business and Unemployment COVID Relief Programs

PROVIDENCE – A North Providence woman today admitted in federal court that she provided false information to a mortgage lender when applying for a Federal Housing Administration (FHA)-backed mortgage, and that she fraudulently applied for a COVID Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) and unemployment insurance benefits under both the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, announced United States Attorney Zachary A. Cunha.

Juliana Martins, 53, who was on federal supervised release at the time of the charged fraudulent activities, pleaded guilty to false statement on a loan application and theft of government property. She is scheduled to be sentenced on August 4, 2022.

At the time of her guilty plea, Martins admitted to the court that while on federal supervised release for her role in a stolen identity refund scheme, as well as while on state probation for an unrelated 2014 conviction for forgery and counterfeiting, she applied for an FHA-guaranteed loan. As part of the application process, she provided false explanations as to her gaps in employment while serving her federal sentence, claiming she was unemployed due to a “family emergency.” Martins also failed to disclose the fact that she was subject to a \$385,533 federal restitution order.

Following the application, Martins and a co-borrower were issued an FHA-insured mortgage in the amount of \$265,109.

Additionally, Martins admitted that in July 2020, she submitted a fraudulent application for a Small Business Administration (SBA) low-interest COVID-related Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL), falsely claiming that she was an independent contractor in the health service business, and that her business had been impacted by the pandemic. Finally, Martins admitted that she fraudulently applied for and received COVID-related unemployment insurance benefits while she was in fact employed as an office manager in April 2020. In total, Martins received over \$40,000 in COVID relief benefits to which she was not entitled.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys G. Michael Seaman and Sandra R. Hebert.

The matter was investigated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development - Office of Inspector General; U.S. Department of Labor – Office of Inspector General; FBI; and Rhode Island State Police, with the assistance of the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training Unemployment Insurance Fraud Unit.

Rhode Islanders who believe their personal identification has been stolen and used to fraudulently obtain unemployment benefits are urged to contact the Rhode Island State Police at financialcrimes@risp.gov or the FBI Providence office at (401) 272-8310.

On May 17, 2021, the United States 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, among other methods, 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>.

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