



THE UNITED STATES

## Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, September 10, 2020

### **Seven Charged in Connection with a \$2.1 Million Money Laundering Scheme that Involved Money from the Paycheck Protection Program**

Seven individuals were charged in an indictment in the District of South Carolina with laundering over \$750,000 of fraudulently obtained funds, including over \$390,000 obtained from a fraudulent Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan. The seven individuals used a variety of methods to launder the money, including laundering the money through a casino. The indictment also identifies over \$2.1 million in funds from twelve different bank accounts allegedly associated with the fraud scheme as subject to forfeiture which agents seized.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Brian C. Rabbitt of the Justice Department's Criminal Division; U.S. Attorney Peter M. McCoy Jr. of the District of South Carolina; Special Agent in Charge Jody Norris of the FBI's Columbia Field Office; Robert J. Murphy, the Special Agent in Charge of the DEA Atlanta Field Division, and Special Agent in Charge Kevin Kupperbusch of the Small Business Administration Office of Inspector General (SBA OIG) Eastern Region made the announcement.

Lauren Marcel Duhart, 34 of Stonecrest, Georgia, Joshua Bernard Smith, 39 of McDonough, Georgia, Steve Ronald Lewis, 43 of Snellville, Georgia, Christopher J. Agard, 41 of Marietta, Georgia, Henry Duffield, 58 of Belton, South Carolina, Jeremy Brandon Latourneau, 43 of Spartanburg, South Carolina, and Derick Keane, 43 of Spartanburg, South Carolina, were charged in an indictment filed in the District of South Carolina with conspiracy to commit wire fraud and conspiracy to commit money laundering. Duhart, Smith, and Agard were arrested this morning and appeared this afternoon before U.S. Magistrate Judge Kevin F. McDonald of the District of South Carolina.

In May 2020, Agard submitted a fraudulent PPP loan application for his business, Wild Stylz Entertainment, LLC, to a financial institution. In support of the application, Agard submitted fraudulent supporting documents that made numerous false and misleading statements about Wild Stylz's number of employees and payroll expenses. The financial institution approved and funded a loan of over \$395,000. Agard disseminated the fraudulently obtained funds to other members of the conspiracy to conceal the true nature of their fraudulently obtained funds. On May 27, 2020, Agard made \$200,000 counter withdrawal at a bank branch. On May 28, 2020, Agard withdrew \$50,000 in cash and made a \$96,000 counter withdrawal. In June 2020, Duhart, Smith, and Lewis requested that Hunt provide Duhart, Smith, and Lewis with bank accounts in which to deposit fraudulently obtained PPP funds. Hunt had previously participated in drug trafficking and financial fraud with two South Carolina business owners. The two South Carolina business owners agreed to let Lewis use their business bank accounts in return for a percentage of the fraudulent funds deposited in their account. Hunt provided the two South Carolina business owner's banking information and additional account access information to Lewis. During multiple recorded calls in early June 2020 Duhart, Lewis, Smith, and Hunt discussed the bank and wire fraud conspiracies. In one call, Lewis informed Hunt that the scheme involved fraudulent bank applications and that they needed to submit as many applications to the bank as possible by June 30th.

The indictment alleges that Agard also utilized his business, Wild Stylz, to launder the proceeds of other fraud schemes. In October of 2019, Lewis recruited Duffield to participate in a fraud scheme. As part of the scheme, Duffield allowed Agard to transfer \$378,000 of fraud proceeds from the Wild Stylz business account to be deposited into Duffield's business account in return for a portion of the proceeds. After the proceeds were deposited, Roosevelt Hunt

(who has pled guilty to related charges), Latourneau, and Keane withdrew the funds from Duffield's account by depositing checks totaling \$200,000 at a casino. After gambling for less than two hours, Hunt, Keane, and Latourneau cashed out from the casino and left with approximately \$198,750 in cash. Lewis met with Hunt to retrieve the cash which had been withdrawn from Duffield's account. Lewis delivered a portion of the cash he picked up from Hunt to Duhart.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act is a federal law enacted March 29, 2020. It is designed to provide emergency financial assistance to millions of Americans who are suffering the economic effects resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. One source of relief provided by the CARES Act is the authorization of up to \$349 billion in forgivable loans to small businesses for job retention and certain other expenses through the PPP. In April 2020, Congress authorized over \$300 billion in additional PPP funding.

The PPP allows qualifying small businesses and other organizations to receive loans with a maturity of two years and an interest rate of one percent. Businesses must use PPP loan proceeds for payroll costs, interest on mortgages, rent and utilities. The PPP allows the interest and principal to be forgiven if businesses spend the proceeds on these expenses within a set time period and use at least a certain percentage of the loan towards payroll expenses.

An indictment is merely an allegation and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

This case was investigated by the FBI, DEA, and the SBA OIG. Trial Attorney Siji Moore of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Sloan P. Ellis and Brandi B. Hinton of the District of South Carolina are prosecuting the case.

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 Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

The year 2020 marks the 150th anniversary of the Department of Justice. Learn more about the history of our agency at [www.Justice.gov/Celebrating150Years](http://www.Justice.gov/Celebrating150Years).

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**Attachment(s):**

[Download Duhart Indictment](#)

**Topic(s):**

Coronavirus  
Disaster Fraud

**Component(s):**

[Criminal Division](#)  
[Criminal - Criminal Fraud Section](#)  
[USAO - South Carolina](#)

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