



718.286.6000
WWW.QUEENS.DA.ORG

QUEENS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568



MELINDA KATZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2021

CONTACT: PRESS OFFICE (718) 286-6315
QDACommunications@queensda.org

QUEENS MAN WHO FILED 13 PHONY UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIMS
TO COLLECT COVID RELIEF FUNDS THROUGH “CARES” ACT
CHARGED WITH GRAND LARCENY

*Alleged Scammer Raked in More Than \$150,000 in Benefits;
Defendant Faces Up to 15 Years in Prison if Convicted*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz, joined by N.Y. State Department of Labor Commissioner Roberta Reardon and the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Inspector General, New York Region Special Agent-in-Charge Jonathan Mellone, announced today that Keijohn Graham, 21, has been indicted by a Queens County grand jury and arraigned in Supreme Court on a 68-count indictment charging him with grand larceny, identity theft and other crimes. The defendant allegedly filed unemployment claims under 13 different names to collect more than \$150,000 – benefits from the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program authorized under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

District Attorney Katz said, “This worldwide health pandemic has been devastating and led to millions of Americans losing their jobs. As part of the CARES Act, Congress expanded who could receive much-needed unemployment benefits and authorized additional money to help those affected. As alleged, this defendant saw this additional support for the needy as an opportunity to fill his own pockets and filed unemployment claims in various names to collect more than \$150,000 in benefits. This fraud during the pandemic costs our country, and our state, billions of dollars. We will not stand for this in Queens County. My Office will continue to diligently investigate these types of crimes and bring those responsible to justice.”

N.Y. Department of Labor Commissioner Reardon said, “We have zero tolerance for thieves, and if you break the law, you will be held accountable. Stealing from a system that is providing a lifeline to New Yorkers in need is unconscionable and doing it during a public health crisis is unforgivable. I commend our partners in the Queens District Attorney’s office and at all levels of law enforcement for their commitment to fighting Unemployment Insurance fraud and bringing this criminal to justice.”

U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, New York Region SAC Mellone said, “The Unemployment Insurance Program exists to provide needed assistance to qualified individuals who are unemployed due to no fault of their own. Fraud against the Unemployment Insurance Program distracts state workforce agencies, like the New York State Department of Labor, from ensuring benefits go to individuals who are eligible to receive them. The Office of Inspector General will continue to work closely with the Queens District Attorney’s Office, the New York State Department of Labor, and our many law enforcement partners, to investigate those who exploit the Unemployment Insurance Program.”

Graham, of Hanson Court in the Far Rockaway neighborhood of Queens, was arraigned this morning before Queens Supreme Court Justice Toni Cimino on an indictment charging him with grand larceny in the second degree, identity theft in the first degree, falsifying business records in the first degree, criminal possession of public benefit cards in the second degree, criminal possession of stolen property in the fourth degree and offering a false instrument for filing in the first degree – related to the alleged fraudulent receipt of unemployment insurance benefits from the State of New York. Justice Cimino ordered the defendant to return to Court on November 30, 2021. If convicted, Graham faces up to 15 years in prison.

According to the charges, the defendant was arrested in the early hours of March 23, 2021, after law enforcement executed a Court-authorized search warrant and seized numerous documents and credit cards, including 13 N.Y.S. Department of Labor benefit debit cards allegedly from Graham's home.

DA Katz said, a joint investigation allegedly revealed that the personal identifying information of 13 individuals - none of whom are the defendant, his family, or other residents of the Hanson Court residence - was used to file unemployment insurance claims with the State Department of Labor under CARES Act. Between October 2020 and March 2021, the defendant allegedly collected more than \$150,000 in benefits.

The investigation was conducted by the United States Department of Labor, Office of the Inspector General, the New York State Department of Labor, the New York City Police Department and the Queens County District Attorney's Office's Major Economic Crimes Bureau.

Assistant District Attorney Jonathan Scharf, Deputy Chief of the DA's Major Economic Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Mary Lowenburg, Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard A. Brave.

Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

#

Note to Editors: Archived press releases are available at www.queensda.org.

