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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Ten Arrested in Pandemic-Related Unemployment Fraud Scheme



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution today announced 10 arrests in connection to a pandemic-related unemployment fraud scheme. The Delray Beach Police Department, with the assistance of the West Palm Beach Police Department and Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, arrested Nathaniel Braxton, Tyrell Bouie, Enos Ducoste, Jean Florexil, Deontre Richardson and Devontre Richardson for active warrants relating to a CARES Act unemployment scheme. Additionally, DBPD made in-custody arrests on Roderek Baker, Roquan Baker, Jordan Lewis and Bakari Washington in connection to the scheme. Attorney General Moody's OSP will prosecute the defendants.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "I am disgusted that anyone would exploit the very real and devastating circumstances of struggling Americans to line their pockets. Thanks to the work of local law enforcement, these criminals are behind bars and will be held accountable by my Statewide Prosecutors for their despicable crimes. Let this be a warning to anyone involved in a similar scheme: if you stole money from the government, it's a good idea to consider giving it back, now."

According to a multiagency investigation, the scheme involved the defendants submitting unemployment claims using their own identification information in multiple states simultaneously. The defendants also allegedly used social media to recruit additional participants to the scheme. The investigation revealed that none of the participants were unemployed due to COVID-19 related conditions in Florida. Additionally, the investigation concluded that the defendants never

held employment in states outside of Florida. The defendants allegedly fraudulently obtained more than $550,000 in pandemic-related, unemployment-assistance funds from multiple states as a result of the scheme.

The U.S. Department of Labor and numerous agencies from other states assisted in the investigation. Additional arrests are pending from outstanding warrants for additional suspects in the scheme.

The defendants are charged with multiple counts of unemployment compensation fraud; a third-degree felony, organized scheme to defraud; a third and second-degree felony, and unlawful use of a two-way communication device; a third-degree felony.

Chief Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Stephanie Tew will prosecute the case.