

**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

Eastern District of Michigan

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, May 10, 2022

## **Federal Inmate Pleads Guilty to Role in Stealing more than \$2.2 Million in Pandemic Assistance Benefits**

**DETROIT** - A current Bureau of Prisons (BOP) inmate (and former Michigan resident) pleaded guilty today to conspiracy to commit wire fraud, in connection with a scheme to defraud multiple state workforce agencies and the Small Business Administration out of more than \$2,200,000 in Covid-19 pandemic assistance, announced United States Attorney Dawn N. Ison.

Joining in the announcement were Irene Lindow, Special Agent-in-Charge, Chicago Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, Special Agent-in-Charge James A. Tarasca, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Andre Martin Special Agent-in-Charge, U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General, and Rita Saenz Director of the California Employment Development Department.

Cortney Daquan Shields, 33, entered his guilty plea this morning, before United States District Judge George Caram Steeh, III.

According to court records, beginning at least as early as May 2020 and continuing through at least July 2021, Shields and others known and unknown to the government agreed to commit wire fraud. Specifically, Shields and his co-conspirators, with the intent to defraud, submitted more than 240 fraudulent unemployment insurance claims to more than 20 states and territories, fraudulently obtaining more than \$2,200,000 in benefits. Shields also successfully obtained a fraudulent \$20,833.00 Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan. Shields participated in the scheme from within the confines of the Federal Correctional Complex in Allenwood, Pennsylvania, where he was serving sentence on an unrelated fraud case. Members of the conspiracy transferred portions of the fraud proceeds to Shields via wire into his Bureau of Prisons commissary account. As part of his plea, Shields agreed to the forfeiture of \$26,794.11 seized from that account.

Charged in a related complaint are Daeshawn Tamar Posey, 25, of Detroit; Chaz Duane Shields, 33, of Detroit; and Brittany Levett Witherspoon, 25, of Warren.

A complaint is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. Trial cannot be held on felony charges in a complaint. When the investigation is completed, a determination will be made whether to seek a felony indictment.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Ryan A. Particka, Timothy J. Wyse, and Special Assistant United States Attorney Corinne M. Lambert. The investigation is being conducted jointly by agents from the Department of Labor Office of the Inspector General, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the United States Postal Service Office of the Inspector General.

**Topic(s):**  
Coronavirus

**Component(s):**  
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