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PRESS RELEASE

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Attorney General Brown Announces Sentencing after Guilty Plea in Felony Theft and Identity Fraud in Fraudulent COVID -19 Unemployment Insurance Claims Case

BALTIMORE, MD (January 11, 2024) – Maryland Attorney General Anthony G. Brown today announced the sentencing of Leslie Awulley Quaye, 25, of Taneytown, Maryland, relating to the filing of fraudulent unemployment insurance claims during the COVID-19 pandemic. On December 12, 2023, Quaye pleaded guilty to one count of felony theft by deception with a value over \$100,000 and two counts of felony identity fraud before the Honorable Lynn Stewart Mays of the Circuit Court for Baltimore City. On January 11, 2024, Judge Mays sentenced Quaye to five years in jail, suspending all but three months. Judge Mays also ordered Quaye to complete five years of supervised probation and pay \$41,905.32 in restitution to the Maryland Department of Labor.

In July 2020, Quaye filed fraudulent unemployment claims in the names of other people, after the federal government allocated billions of dollars in funding to states for residents who were suddenly unemployed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. By filing these fraudulent unemployment claims, Quaye caused the Maryland Department of Labor to distribute over \$140,000 in bogus unemployment insurance benefits onto bank debit cards. Quaye listed his own physical address as the mailing address on the fraudulent claims, so that they would be mailed to him. Upon receiving the debit cards, Quaye spent over \$40,000 of the funds for his own personal benefit.

In making today's announcement, Attorney General Brown thanked Assistant Attorney General Alyn Pearson and investigative auditor Amy Amy for their hard work on this case, as well as the Beacon team at the Division of Unemployment Insurance and the Maryland Department of Labor.

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