

PRESS RELEASE

# Georgia man sentenced to prison for COVID-19 relief fraud two years after being sentenced by the same court for mortgage fraud

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## For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Georgia

ATLANTA - Maurice Lawson has been sentenced to federal prison for obtaining nearly a half a million dollars by submitting multiple fraudulent Paycheck Protection Program (“PPP”) and Economic Injury Disaster Loan (“EIDL”) applications.

“Congress enacted the Paycheck Protection Program to provide emergency financial assistance to millions of Americans suffering the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lawson took advantage of a federal program that depended on self-reporting to get relief in the hands of American businesses as fast as possible,” said U.S. Attorney Ryan K. Buchanan. “His crimes make it harder for the United States to provide disaster relief during the next large-scale emergency. This office, in coordination with our federal, state, and local law enforcement partners, is dedicated to holding individuals who sought to exploit this critical economic safety net accountable for their conduct.”

“Lawson used his position during an unprecedented national pandemic to steal critical taxpayer money intended to provide relief to legitimate small businesses and employees who desperately needed it,” said Special Agent-in-Charge Jerome Winkle with the HUD Office of Inspector General. “HUD OIG remains steadfast in its commitment to working with the U.S. Attorney’s Office and law enforcement partners to aggressively pursue those who engage in activities that threaten the integrity of HUD and other federal programs.”

“We remain committed to combatting fraud within the Paycheck Protection Program,” said Edwin Bonano, Special Agent in Charge of FHFA-OIG’s Southeast Region. “FHFA-OIG will pursue criminals who created fraudulent schemes to divert PPP funds from those it was meant to aid until they are held fully accountable.”

According to U.S. Attorney Buchanan, the charges and other information presented in court: Between April 2020 and March 2021, Lawson applied for at least seven PPP or EIDL loans for six different businesses. The applications contained an assortment of false information, including false Tax Forms 940 and 941, fake social security cards, fraudulent addresses, falsified average monthly payroll claims, and false claims of employing between five and 12 employees. In total, Lawson sought \$537,120, and received \$419,020, in loan proceeds. Among the businesses used to seek these loans was Coastal Drape, LLC – the same company that Lawson used during his

mortgage fraud conspiracy, for which he was sentenced in March 2021 to three years of federal probation. Lawson received funds from one of the fraudulent COVID-19 loan applications days after being sentenced for mortgage fraud.

Maurice Lawson, 39, of Lithia Springs, Georgia, has been sentenced to one year, nine months in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$437,870.07. Lawson was convicted on these charges on May 16, 2023, after he pleaded guilty.

This case was investigated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Inspector General and Federal Housing Finance Agency Office of Inspector General.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Alison Prout prosecuted the case.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with agencies across government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The Task Force bolsters efforts to investigate and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programs to prevent fraud by, among other methods, augmenting and incorporating existing coordination mechanisms, identifying resources and techniques to uncover fraudulent actors and their schemes, and sharing and harnessing information and insights gained from prior enforcement efforts. For more information on the Department's response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>

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

For further information please contact the U.S. Attorney's Public Affairs Office at [USAGAN.PressEmails@usdoj.gov](mailto:USAGAN.PressEmails@usdoj.gov) or (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is <http://www.justice.gov/usao-ndga>.

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