

**Department of Justice**

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, January 4, 2022

## **Georgia Woman Sentenced to 41 Months in COVID-19 Fraud Scheme**

A Georgia woman was sentenced today to 41 months in prison for her scheme to fraudulently obtain more than \$7.9 million in Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans guaranteed by the Small Business Administration (SBA) under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

According to court documents, Hunter VanPelt, aka Ellen Corkrum, 49, of Roswell, pleaded guilty in August 2021 to bank fraud after submitting six fraudulent PPP loan applications to four different lenders on behalf of Georgia Nephrology Physician Associated, United Healthcare Group & Co., Nephrology Network Group LLC, First Corporate International, Corkrum Consolidated Inc., and Kiwi International Inc, entities she owned or controlled. Through the loan applications, VanPelt sought more than \$7.9 million and obtained over \$6 million in PPP loan funds.

According to court documents, VanPelt lied about the number of employees and payroll expenses in each of the six PPP loan applications. To support the fraudulent PPP loan applications, VanPelt also submitted fraudulent tax records, bank statements, and payroll reports. VanPelt, who legally changed her name from Ellen Corkrum to Hunter VanPelt in July 2016, submitted three of the PPP loan applications using the name VanPelt and the other three PPP loan applications using the name Corkrum.

The Justice Department, working with law enforcement partners, seized and recovered approximately \$2.1 million of the disbursed PPP funds in this matter. An additional \$1.6 million of the disbursed PPP funds were seized by a bank and returned to the lender.

Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Polite Jr. of the Justice Department's Criminal Division; U.S. Attorney Kurt R. Erskine for the Northern District of Georgia; Acting Assistant Director Jay Greenberg of the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division; Special Agent in Charge Chris Hacker of the FBI's Atlanta Field Office; and Special Agent in Charge Edwin S. Bonano of the Federal Housing Finance Agency – Office of Inspector General (FHFA-OIG) Southeast Region made the announcement.

The FBI and FHFA-OIG investigated the case.

Trial Attorney Chris Wenger of the National Rapid Response Strike Force of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section and Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher Huber, Deputy Chief of the Complex Frauds Section of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia, prosecuted the case.

The Fraud Section leads the Criminal Division's prosecution of fraud schemes that exploit the PPP. Since the inception of the CARES Act, the Fraud Section has prosecuted over 150 defendants in more than 95 criminal cases and has seized over \$75 million in cash proceeds derived from fraudulently obtained PPP funds, as well as numerous real estate properties and luxury items purchased with such proceeds. More information can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/criminal-fraud/ppp-fraud>.

In May 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>.

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