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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Northern District of Ohio

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, April 28, 2022

Strongsville Man Charged with Defrauding SNAP Program and Theft of Public Money

Acting U.S. Attorney Michelle M. Baeppler announced that a federal grand jury returned a four-count indictment charging Sleiman Awada, 54, of Strongsville, Ohio, with stealing public funds and with participating in a conspiracy to defraud the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) program.

According to the indictment, the defendant worked with others at a convenience store on Warrensville Center Road in Warrensville Heights, Ohio. This convenience store was registered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (USDA-FNS) to participate in the SNAP program and receive benefit payments. The indictment alleges that from May 2019 through September 2020, the defendant and others directed certain individuals to use their SNAP benefits to purchase items at other stores only to be resold in the Warrensville Heights convenience store at a profit.

In one example, it is alleged that the defendant met with an individual at the convenience store and provided that person with \$150,000 in exchange for \$389.37 worth of products that the defendant knew had been acquired outside of the convenience store and purchased with SNAP benefits.

The indictment also alleges that during this time, the defendant was fraudulently receiving benefits through Medicaid, Social Security, and SNAP. Though the defendant worked at the convenience store, he failed to disclose that work when applying for benefits. The defendant also created fictitious paystubs indicating that the defendant's wife worked for and received payment from the convenience store. It is alleged that the defendant knew this to be untrue and failed to disclose his own work at the store in order to receive government benefits to which he was not entitled, including SNAP, Medicaid, and Social Security disability benefits.

In total, the defendant is accused of receiving more than \$215,000 in Medicaid benefits, \$100,000 in SNAP benefits, and more than \$200,000 in disability insurance benefits.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is entitled to a fair trial in which it is the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

If convicted, the defendant's sentence will be determined by the court after a review of factors unique to this case, including the defendant's prior criminal record, if any, the defendant's role in the offenses, and the characteristics of the violation.

In all cases, the sentence will not exceed the statutory maximum, and in most cases, it will be less than the maximum.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States Department of Agriculture Office of Inspector General, the Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General, the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division, and the Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Segev Phillips.

Topic(s):

Financial Fraud

Component(s):

USAO - Ohio, Northern

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