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Friday, February 7, 2020

Detroit Area Retail Vendor Sentenced to 24 Months for Food Stamp Fraud

A Detroit-area retail vendor will spend 24 months in prison for defrauding the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as the food stamp program, U.S. Attorney Matthew Schneider announced today.

Joining Schneider in the announcement was Anthony V. Mohatt, Special Agent-in-Charge of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Inspector General (USDA-OIG) Chicago Regional Office.

Ali Youssef Aoun, 52, was sentenced on February 7, 2020, by U.S District Court Judge Robert H. Cleland after pleading guilty to three counts of defrauding the SNAP program.

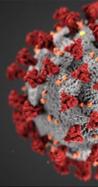
Aoun, who has owned or operated convenience stores in Detroit for at least 18 years, took advantage of vulnerable SNAP recipients by exchanging benefits for cash, while only paying fifty cents on the dollar. He would disguise the benefits as income into his stores or use them to purchase items for himself. Trading SNAP benefits for cash is a violation of federal law. Over four years, Aoun fraudulently obtained approximately \$341,360.41 from the federal SNAP program. In addition to the term of imprisonment, the Court the entered a forfeiture money judgment in the amount of \$341,360.41.

In delivering the sentence, the Court stated Mr. Aoun's crimes were "utterly unacceptable" and that the verdict should "stand as a beacon to others in a similar situation."

United States Attorney Schneider said of the verdict, "Defendant Aoun committed his fraud on the backs of people who truly need the SNAP program to put food on the

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**United States v.
Emanuele Palma**

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U.S. v. Larry Holley et.al.

**U.S. v. Matthew D.
Thomas**

U.S. v. Michael Zeidler

U.S. v. Tara Lee

**U.S. v. Dr. Rajendra
Bothra, et. al.**

U.S. v. Rathburn et al

dinner table and make ends meet. His crime was motivated solely by greed and today's sentence should send a message to all SNAP vendors that our office takes fraud seriously and will prosecute offenders to the full extent of the law."

USDA Special Agent-in-Charge Anthony V. Mohatt said, "The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program helps put healthy food on the table of 1.3 million Michigan residents each month. The criminal activities of the store owner targeted during this investigation deprived needy citizens of the Detroit area access to nutritious meals. The USDA Office of Inspector General will continue to target those who prey on federal food assistance programs, and their recipients."

The case was investigated by agents of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Detroit. Assistant United States Attorneys Tim Wyse and Shankar Ramamurthy prosecuted the case.

Topic(s):
Financial Fraud

Component(s):
USAO - Michigan, Eastern

Updated February 7, 2020

16-CR-20043

U.S. v. Farid Fata

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