

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Central District of California

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Santa Ana Man Charged with Using Stolen Identities to
Apply for More Than \$1 Million in Pandemic-Related
Unemployment Benefits**

SANTA ANA, California – A federal grand jury today returned an eight-count indictment charging an Orange County man with defrauding California's unemployment insurance program by using personal information stolen from people with similar names to apply for \$1.25 million in COVID-19 unemployment benefits.

Nhan Hoang Pham, 36, of Santa Ana, was charged with three counts of mail fraud in relation to benefits connected to presidentially declared emergency, one count of wire fraud in relation to benefits connected to presidentially declared emergency, and four counts of aggravated identity theft. Pham is currently in state custody on unrelated charges, and he is expected to be arraigned on the federal indictment following his release later this month.

The indictment alleges that Pham, from approximately July 2020 through April 2021, submitted fraudulent applications for unemployment insurance after acquiring personal identifying information – such as dates of birth and Social Security numbers – from individuals with identical or similar names who lived in California, Texas and Michigan. Pham allegedly submitted 24 fraudulent applications to the California Employment Development Department (EDD), which administers unemployment insurance benefits for residents of California, including Pandemic Unemployment Assistance benefits to individuals who were unemployed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pham directed that unemployment benefit cards issued by Bank of America on behalf of the EDD be sent to mail drops he controlled in Anaheim, according to the indictment, which alleges that Pham and co-schemers used the benefit cards to withdraw cash from ATMs across Orange County.

Pham allegedly filed applications that fraudulently sought \$1,255,350 in unemployment benefits, and the total loss in this case is approximately \$408,496.

An indictment contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

If convicted of the charges in the indictment, Pham would face a statutory maximum sentence of 30 years in federal prison for each of the four fraud counts. Additionally, the aggravated identity theft charges carry a mandatory two-year consecutive sentence.

The United States Secret Service; the United States Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General; the California Employment Development Department, Investigation Division; the

Orange County District Attorney's Office, Bureau of Investigation; and the Santa Ana Police Department conducted the investigation into Pham.

Assistant United States Attorney Daniel S. Lim of the Santa Ana Branch Office is prosecuting this case.

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