



# Department of Justice

United States Attorney Ryan K. Buchanan  
Northern District of Georgia

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## **CORRECTIONAL OFFICER INDICTED FOR PAYCHECK PROTECTION PROGRAM FRAUD**

ATLANTA - Harrescia Hopkins, a correctional officer employed at the U.S. Penitentiary in Atlanta, Georgia, has been arraigned on federal charges of wire fraud for fraudulently obtaining two Paycheck Protection Program (“PPP”) loans. Hopkins was indicted by a federal grand jury on August 9, 2022.

“Hopkins was employed in a position of trust to help safeguard our community,” said U.S. Attorney Ryan K. Buchanan. “But during a time of extreme economic need in our nation due to the COVID-19 pandemic she chose to defraud taxpayers and improperly take funds intended to help struggling businesses survive.”

“Hopkins allegedly tried to take advantage of the system by fraudulently obtaining PPP funds earmarked for those who were legitimately struggling to make ends meet during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic,” said James F. Boyersmith, Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General Miami Field Office.

According to U.S. Attorney Buchanan, the charges, and other information presented in court: The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (“CARES”) Act was a federal law enacted in or about March 2020 that was designed to provide emergency financial assistance to the millions of Americans who were suffering the economic effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. One source of relief that the CARES Act provided was the authorization of up to \$349 billion in forgivable loans to small businesses for payroll, mortgage interest, rent/lease, and utilities through a program referred to as the Paycheck Protection Program. Congress has since authorized additional PPP funding.

The PPP allowed qualifying small businesses and other organizations to receive PPP loans. Businesses must use PPP loan proceeds for payroll costs, interest on mortgages, rent, and utilities. The PPP allowed the interest and principal on a PPP loan to be entirely forgiven if the business spent the loan proceeds on these expense items within a designated period of time and used a certain percentage of the PPP loan proceeds for payroll expenses.

Hopkins, while a Federal Bureau of Prisons correctional officer, allegedly applied for two PPP loans for \$19,100 each in August 2020 and January 2021. The PPP loan applications were purportedly to help a business named Hopkins Towing and Storage, which she claimed had a gross income of \$100,525 in 2019. In reality, Hopkins Towing and Storage was not a real and functioning business, and Hopkins caused the loan proceeds to be deposited into her personal checking account.

Harrescia Hopkins, 33, of Stone Mountain, Georgia, was arraigned before U.S. Magistrate Judge Christopher C. Bly. Members of the public are reminded that the indictment only contains charges. The defendant is presumed innocent of the charges, and it will be the government's burden to prove the defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

This case is being investigated by the Department of Justice, Office of Inspector General.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Garrett L. Bradford, Deputy Chief of the Public Integrity and Special Matters Section, is prosecuting 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>.