



**United States Attorney's Office
Eastern District of Michigan**

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PRESS RELEASE

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**TWO INDIVIDUALS CHARGED WITH STEALING PERSONAL
INFORMATION OF MORE THAN 1,400 PEOPLE**

An indictment was unsealed yesterday charging two individuals with running an identity theft and false income tax return scheme, announced United States Attorney Barbara L. McQuade.

McQuade was joined in the announcement by Jeffrey Frost, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Secret Service, Detroit Field Office; Jarod Koopman, Special Agent in Charge, Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigations; and Chief Michael Patton, West Bloomfield Police Department.

This six-count indictment charges Markitta Washington, 29, of Hampton, Georgia, and previously of Farmington Hills, Michigan, and Martez Lear, 29, of Farmington Hills, with multiple counts of identity theft-related crimes.

According to the indictment, Washington, who worked for Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital and DMC Harper Hospital, removed patient records, including Personal Identifying Information (PII) and used that information to file false tax returns in other people's names. During the execution of a search warrant at a residence shared by Washington and Lear, personal information belonging to approximately 1,400 people was recovered. The information included individuals' names, dates of birth, and Social Security numbers. Counterfeit and re-encoded credit cards and gifts cards were also recovered. The indictment alleges that at least 305 victims whose PII was stolen had false tax returns filed on their behalf for tax years 2011 and 2012, resulting in a loss to the Internal Revenue Service of approximately \$489,000. Most of the refunds were sent

using prepaid debit cards, some of which were recovered from the home shared by Washington and Lear.

United States McQuade, stated, "Criminals should know that while technology has made it easier than ever for them to commit identify fraud, technology is also making it easier for law enforcement to catch them. We are making enforcement of identity theft a high priority because this crime has become so pervasive and can be so damaging to victims."

"As reflected by the indictments, United States Secret Service in Detroit—along with our federal, state and local partners—remains dedicated to the pursuit and apprehension of those responsible for these serious identity theft cases," stated Jeff Frost, Special Agent in Charge of the Secret Service Detroit Field Office. "The continued, multi-jurisdictional collaboration between law enforcement resulted in the indictment of these individuals for their involvement in these crimes, and we will maintain our resolve as we continue to thoroughly investigate this case."

"Investigators in this case have been relentless. It should send a powerful message to the criminals within our community that identity theft crimes will not be tolerated and will be vigorously investigated and prosecuted," stated IRS Special Agent in Charge Jarod Koopman.

"The entire West Bloomfield community is grateful for the great law enforcement partnership that has led to the continuing federal indictments related to these very serious crimes. As the investigation continues, this partnership remains devoted to bringing everyone that played a role in these incidents to justice," said Chief Michael Patton.

Washington was arrested in Georgia, where she appeared in court and was released on a personal bond to appear in court in the Eastern District of Michigan for arraignment on the charges. Lear is currently serving a sentence in the Michigan Department of Corrections for gun related charges.

The case was investigated by the Southeast Michigan Financial and Cyber Crimes Task Force, which is based at the Novi Police Department and includes U.S. Secret Service, Homeland Security Investigations, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and IRS Criminal Investigations agents, as well as state and local law enforcement officers from the West Bloomfield, Novi, Royal Oak, Southfield, and Troy Police Departments.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Abed Hammoud with the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan in Detroit.

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

Hospitals have notified individual victims whose personal information was compromised. Patients of the Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital may call (313)874-9561with any questions. Patients of DMC Harper Hospital may call (313) 966-8818.