

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
FORT MYERS DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

EDRICA LEANN WATSON

CASE NO. 2:21-cr-107-SPC MRM
18 U.S.C. § 1344
18 U.S.C. § 1014

INDICTMENT

The Grand Jury charges:

COUNT ONE
(Bank Fraud)

A. Introduction

At all times material to this Indictment:

1. Edrica Leann Watson was a resident of Lehigh Acres, Florida, who served as manager and registered agent of Unity Home Care Services, LLC.
2. Unity Home Care Services, LLC (“Unity Home Care”) was a Florida company controlled by Edrica Leann Watson with its stated principal place of business in Fort Myers, Florida. Unity Home Care purported to provide home health care services. Unity Home Care maintained a bank account with JPMorgan Chase Bank, for which Edrica Leann Watson was the sole signatory.
3. The United States Small Business Administration (“SBA”) was an executive-branch agency of the United States government that provided support to entrepreneurs and small businesses. The mission of the SBA was to maintain and

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FORT MYERS DIVISION

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strengthen the nation's economy by enabling the establishment and viability of small businesses and by assisting in the economic recovery of communities after disasters. As part of this effort, the SBA enabled and provided for loans through banks, credit unions, and other lenders. These loans had government-backed guarantees.

5. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security ("CARES") Act was a federal law enacted in or around March 2020 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 provided by the CARES Act was the authorization of forgivable loans to small businesses for job retention and certain other expenses, through a program referred to as the Paycheck Protection Program ("PPP").

6. To obtain a PPP loan, a qualifying business was required to submit a PPP loan application, which was signed by an authorized representative of the business. The PPP loan application required the business (through its authorized representative) to acknowledge the program rules and make certain affirmative certifications in order to be eligible to obtain the PPP loan. In the PPP loan application (SBA Form 2483), the small business (through its authorized representative) was required to state, among other things, its: (a) average monthly payroll expenses; and (b) number of employees. These figures were used to calculate the amount of money the small business was eligible to receive under the PPP. In addition, businesses applying for a PPP loan were required to provide documentation showing their payroll expenses.

7. PPP loan applications were processed by a participating lender. If a PPP loan application was approved, the participating lender funded the PPP loan using its own monies, which were 100% guaranteed by the SBA. Data from the application, including information from the borrower, the total amount of the loan, and the listed number of employees, was transmitted by the lender to the SBA in the course of processing the loan.

8. PPP loan proceeds were required to be used for certain permissible expenses, including payroll costs, mortgage interest, rent, and utilities. Under the applicable PPP rules and guidance, the interest and principal on the PPP loan was eligible for forgiveness if the business spent the loan proceeds on these expense items within a designated period of time and used a certain portion of the loan towards payroll expenses.

9. The Lender was a financial institution federally insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation ("FDIC") headquartered in Pennsylvania. The Lender participated in the SBA's PPP as a lender and, as such, was authorized to lend funds to eligible borrowers under the terms of PPP.

B. The Scheme to Defraud

10. Starting in or about September 2020, and continuing through and including the date of this Indictment, in the Middle District of Florida, and elsewhere, the defendant,

EDRICA LEANN WATSON,

did knowingly and intentionally execute, and attempt to execute, a scheme and

artifice to defraud a financial institution, and to obtain monies, funds, credits, assets, and other property owned by, and under the custody and control of, a financial institution, by means of materially false and fraudulent pretenses, representations and promises.

C. Manner and Means of the Scheme

11. The manner and means by which the defendant sought to accomplish the scheme and artifice to defraud included, among others, the following:

a. It was part of the scheme and artifice to defraud that the defendant would and did register with Florida Division of Corporations, Unity Home Caron or about September 2020 for the purposes of obtaining a PPP loan.

b. It was further part of the scheme and artifice to defraud that the defendant would and did open a bank account in the name of UNITY HOME CARE on or about September 2020 for the purposes of depositing PPP loan proceeds.

c. It was further part of the scheme and artifice to defraud that the defendant would and did submit and cause the submission of a false and fraudulent PPP loan application to the Lender on behalf of UNITY HOME CARE seeking a PPP loan through the SBA.

d. It was further part of the scheme and artifice to defraud that the defendant would and did make and cause to be made materially false, fraudulent, and misleading representations to the Lender and SBA related to the use of the PPP funds in the PPP loan application submitted on or about April 2, 2021. Including

that the funds would be used for payroll and other eligible business operation expenses as specified in the loan application.

e. It was further part of the scheme and artifice to defraud that the defendant would and did falsely represent the number of employees, the monthly payroll, and gross income in the PPP loan application in order to increase loan funding.

f. It was further part of the scheme and artifice to defraud that the defendant's materially false, fraudulent, and misleading representations would and did cause the SBA to approve the PPP application and the SBA to issue \$392,563 in PPP loan funds to the Lender, which the Lender then deposited into an account under the defendant's control.

g. It was further part of the scheme and artifice to defraud that the defendant would and did misrepresent, hide, and conceal, and cause to be misrepresented, hidden, and concealed, the purpose of acts performed in furtherance of the scheme to defraud.

D. Execution of the Scheme

12. Starting in or about April 2021, and continuing through and including the date of this Indictment, in the Middle District of Florida and elsewhere, the defendant,

EDRICA LEANN WATSON,
knowingly executed the aforesaid scheme and artifice to defraud, by submitting a false PPP loan application on behalf of her company, UNITY HOME CARE, in

order to receive a loan from the Lender, a bank insured by the FDIC, which loan was guaranteed by the SBA and which proceeds were deposited into an account of the Lender under the defendant's custody and control.

All in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1344 and 2.

COUNT TWO
(False Statement to Lending Institution)

1. Paragraphs 1 through 9 of Part A of Count One of this Indictment are realleged and incorporated by reference as if fully set forth herein.

2. On or about April 2, 2021, in the Middle District of Florida and elsewhere, the defendant,

EDRICA LEANN WATSON,

knowingly made a false statement, for the purpose of influencing the actions of the Lender, an institution the accounts of which were insured by the FDIC, in connection with a PPP loan application by Unity Home Care, in that the defendant signed and initialed a PPP loan application representing SBA loan proceeds would only be used for business related purposes and certifying that the PPP funds would be used to retain workers and maintain payroll or make mortgage payments, lease payments, and utility payments on behalf of Unity Home Care; when in truth and in fact, as the defendant well knew, all of the SBA loan proceeds would not only be used for business related purposes and that the PPP funds would not be used to retain workers and maintain payroll or to make mortgage interest payments, lease payments, and utility payments on behalf of Unity Home Care.

In violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1014 and 2.

FORFEITURE

1. The allegations contained in Counts One and Two are incorporated by reference for the purpose of alleging forfeiture pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 982(a)(2)(A).

2. Upon conviction of a violation of 18 U.S.C §§ 1014, and/or 1344, the defendant,

EDRICA LEANN WATSON,

shall forfeit to the United States, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 982(a)(2)(A), any property constituting, or derived from, proceeds obtained directly or indirectly, as a result of such violation.

3. The property to be forfeited includes, but is not limited to, an order of forfeiture in the amount of approximately \$392,563.00, which represents the proceeds obtained from the offenses.

4. If any of the property described above, as a result of any act or omission of the defendant:

- a. cannot be located upon the exercise of due diligence;
- b. has been transferred or sold to, or deposited with, a third party;
- c. has been placed beyond the jurisdiction of the Court;
- d. has been substantially diminished in value; or
- e. has been commingled with other property which cannot be divided without difficulty,

the United States shall be entitled to forfeiture of substitute property under the

provisions of 21 U.S.C § 853(p), as incorporated by 18 U.S.C § 982(b)(1).

A TRUE BILL,


Foreperson

KARIN HOPPMANN
Acting United States Attorney

By:



Shannon Laurie
Assistant United States Attorney

By:



Jesus M. Casas
Assistant United States Attorney
Chief, Fort Myers Division

No. 2:21-cr-

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
Middle District of Florida
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THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

vs.

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INDICTMENT

Violations:

18 U.S.C. §§ 1344 and 1014

A true bill,

Foreperson

Filed in open court this 1st day

of December, 2021.

Clerk

Bail \$ _____
