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Thursday, April 26, 2018

Worcester Business Owner Sentenced for Defrauding SNAP and Selling Counterfeit Merchandise

BOSTON – The owner of Esther's Fashion Paradise was sentenced yesterday in federal court in Worcester for defrauding the SNAP benefits program and selling counterfeit merchandise.

Esther Acquaye, 31, of Worcester, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Timothy S. Hillman to eight months in prison, three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$285,075 in restitution. In December 2017, Acquaye pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to acquire, possess, and redeem SNAP benefits in an unauthorized manner, and to convert public money; one count of SNAP fraud; and one count of trafficking in counterfeit goods.

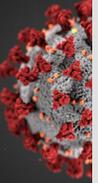
On numerous occasions between November 2013 and April 2016, Acquaye, the owner of Esther's Fashion Paradise in Worcester, accepted EBT cards from SNAP recipients wishing to exchange their SNAP benefits for cash. Specifically, Acquaye passed the EBT cards through a point-of-sale terminal causing the full value of the SNAP benefits to be electronically transferred to her business, and then provided less than the full value of the SNAP benefits in cash to the SNAP recipients. In total, Acquaye caused approximately \$282,541 in fraudulent EBT transactions and SNAP benefits to be transacted at Esther's.

In addition, on at least four occasions between November 2015 and March 2016, Acquaye accepted an EBT card from an undercover investigator as payment for counterfeit retail goods. Acquaye sold the investigator two counterfeit Michael Kors purses, one counterfeit Gucci purse, one counterfeit The North Face jacket, and one counterfeit Michael Kors wallet.



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United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling; Bethanne M. Dinkins, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations, Northeast Region; and Michael Shea, Acting Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Boston, made the announcement. Assistant U.S. Attorney Michelle Dineen Jerrett of Lelling's Worcester Branch Office prosecuted the case.

Topic(s):
Consumer Protection

Component(s):
USAO - Massachusetts

Updated April 26, 2018



Information on the Boston Marathon bombing cases

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