PRESS RELEASE

Reality TV star sentenced for PPP fraud and for operating a multimillion-dollar Ponzi scheme

Wednesday, September 15, 2021

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Georgia

ATLANTA - Maurice Fayne, who starred in Love & Hip Hop: Atlanta, has been sentenced to more than 17 years in federal prison for conspiracy and wire fraud related to a Ponzi scheme, and for bank fraud, and making false statements to a financial institution related a fraudulent Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan application.

“Fayne planned to use the PPP program as a cover for his long-running Ponzi scheme,” said Acting U.S. Attorney Kurt R. Erskine. “The funds the program supplies serve as a lifeline to many businesses desperately trying to stay afloat during the pandemic, and unfortunately his fraud helped deplete those precious dollars.”

“This sentence should serve notice that the FBI and our federal partners will investigate anyone who misdirects federal emergency assistance earmarked for businesses who need it to stay afloat,” said Chris Hacker, Special Agent in Charge of FBI Atlanta. “We won’t tolerate anyone driven by personal greed to pocket American taxpayer money that should be going to those who need it.”

“Lying to gain access to SBA’s pandemic response programs is not without consequence,” said SBA OIG’s Eastern Region Special Agent in Charge Amaleka McCall-Brathwaite. “OIG will relentlessly pursue evidence of fraud against SBA's programs aimed at assisting the nation's small businesses struggling with the pandemic challenges. I want to thank the U.S. Attorney's Office for its leadership and dedication to pursuing justice."

According to Acting U.S. Attorney Erskine, the charges, and other information presented in court: From March 2013 through May 2020, Fayne ran a multistate Ponzi scheme that defrauded more than 20 people who invested in his trucking business. Fayne promised that he would use the investors' money to operate the business. Instead, he used the money to pay his personal debts and expenses and to fund an extravagant lifestyle for himself. During the scheme, Fayne spent more than $5 million at a casino in Oklahoma.

In April 2020, Fayne submitted a $3.7 million PPP loan application to United Community Bank, falsely claiming that his trucking business had 107 employees and an average monthly payroll of $1,490,200. Fayne promised to use the PPP loan proceeds to retain workers and maintain payroll or make mortgage interest payments, lease payments, and utility payments related to his trucking business. Instead, Fayne used the PPP loan proceeds for improper purposes, including the following:

- $40,000 for past-due child support;
- $50,000 for restitution owed in a previous fraud case;
- $65,000 in cash withdrawals;
- $85,000 for custom-made jewelry;
- $136,000 to lease a Rolls-Royce;
- $230,000 to associates who helped him run a Ponzi scheme;
- $907,000 to start a new business in Arkansas.

Maurice Fayne, a/k/a Arkansas Mo, 38, of Dacula, Georgia, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Mark H. Cohen to 17 years, six months in prison to be followed by five years of supervised release and ordered to pay restitution in the amount of $4,465,865.55 to the victims. Fayne was convicted on these charges on May 11, 2021, after he pleaded guilty.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Small Business Administration-Office of Inspector General.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Russell Phillips and Bernita Malloy prosecuted 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 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.

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