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March 12, 2021 – For immediate release
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FRAUD ALERT: COMPTROLLER MYCHAJLIW AND NYS LABOR DEPARTMENT WARN OF UNEMPLOYMENT SCAM

Fraudsters are stealing identities to try and illegally swindle unemployment benefits

(ERIE COUNTY, NY) – The Erie County Comptroller’s office is warning of a scam that the New York State Labor Department says involves the stealing of identities to cheat their system in order to illegally receive unemployment benefits. According to the NYS Department of Labor, more than 425,000 unemployment claims totaling over \$5.5 billion in benefits were filed fraudulently. Those cases have been referred to law enforcement and prosecutors.

“Taxpayers need to be vigilant protecting their identities, especially seniors. This is a sad example of scam artists taking advantage of this COVID-19 crisis. The Coronavirus hurt families and destroyed businesses. Adding insult to injury, people without a conscience are stealing identities and scamming the unemployment system. It is reprehensible,” said Comptroller Mychajliw.

More than four million New Yorkers have been paid over \$65 billion in benefits since the COVID-19 crisis began one year ago. The NYS Labor Department says that amounts to what would typically be paid over a 30-year time period.

The Erie County Comptroller’s Office has also worked for years with area Senior Centers, informing our senior population of the Senior Fraud Protection Program, which advises the vulnerable population on such scams as: Medicare/Health Insurance, Counterfeit/Prescription Drugs, Funeral and Cemetery Products, Fraudulent Personal Products, Telemarketing and Computer Fraud, Investment Schemes, Homeowner/Contractor Scams, and Sweepstakes and Lottery Scams.

The Comptroller has also been advising Erie County taxpayers about other COVID scams such as: Price Gouging, Phishing, Fake Websites, and Donation Solicitation.

“It takes a special kind of terrible person to scam seniors or take advantage of worldwide pandemics for their own personal gain. Now they have to worry about identity theft, too, to try and steal public dollars. It’s terrible,” said Comptroller Mychajliw.

If you think your identity may have been fraudulently used to obtain New York State unemployment, go to: <http://on.ny.gov/uifraud> or call the New York State Labor Department at 1-800-DO-RIGHT (800-367-4448).

“Taxpayers need to be vigilant. This heartless scam serves as an unfortunate reminder there are those that break the law, steal identities, all to scam the system. If you suspect your identity has been used for these purposes, you should contact the State Labor Department immediately,” concluded Comptroller Mychajliw.

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