

# **Dominican national sentenced for stealing \$17,198 in unemployment, MassHealth**

A Dominican national previously residing in Lawrence was sentenced yesterday for Social Security fraud, aggravated identity theft, and benefits fraud.

Jose Miguel Baez, 43, was sentenced via videoconference by U.S. District Court Judge William G. Young to two years and one day in prison and two years of supervised release. The defendant also was ordered to pay restitution of approximately \$17,198 to MassHealth, the Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance and various other utility and medical providers. Baez will be subject to deportation proceedings upon completion of his sentence. In December 2019, Baez pleaded guilty to one count each of false representation of a Social Security Number, aggravated identity theft and false statements in matters relating to health care.

On Aug. 7, 2017, Baez applied for and obtained a Massachusetts driver's license in the identity of a Puerto Rican born United States citizen. Eight days later, Baez applied for MassHealth using the victim's identity and obtained \$3,727 in MassHealth benefits. Baez also used the victim's identity in other instances, including to collect unemployment benefits and for utility and medical bills, which Baez defaulted on. Baez use of the identity resulted in a total loss of at least \$17,194 to utility companies, medical providers, MassHealth and the state unemployment agency.

When Baez was arrested in April 2019, agents recovered the Massachusetts driver's license issued to him in the fraudulent identity and a copy of his Dominican identification document in his true name bearing his photo. Baez was identified, among

other things, from a fingerprint match with a Dominican Republic identification document issued to him.

United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling; Jason Molina, Acting Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Boston; Scott Antolik, Special Agent in Charge of the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations, Boston Field Division; Michael Mikulka, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigation, New York Regional Office; and Phillip Coyne, Special Agent in Charge of Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations, Boston Field Division made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney Lindsey E. Weinstein of Lelling's Criminal Division prosecuted the case.