

# **Massachusetts Troopers charge Massachusetts man with fraudulent EBT scheme to purchase food served in restaurant**

Shortly after 8 a.m. today, Troopers from the Massachusetts State Police C3 Policing Team, along with other State Police units and Holyoke and Springfield Police, executed two simultaneous warrants and arrested a Holyoke man for large-scale Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) fraud.

Today's arrest of JOSE A. BAEZ, 55, followed a nearly year-long investigation by State Police and the Department of Transitional Assistance into the defendant's fraudulent scheme.

Specifically, surveillance by Troopers and additional investigative actions determined that BAEZ was purchasing large quantities of food products on an almost daily basis at two Springfield food distributors, 90 Meat Outlet and Sweet Life Foods Company (also known as Cash and Carry), both located on Avocado Street in Springfield. Evidence collected by Troopers and investigators indicates BAEZ was making the food purchases with multiple fraudulently-obtained EBT cards, in violation of legitimate use of the EBT program.

The investigation determined that after purchasing the food, BAEZ would take the products to a restaurant owned by his wife, El Rincon Boricua Restaurant, 216 Lyman St., Holyoke. The EBT-acquired food products were allegedly used in preparation of meals served at the restaurant.

Troopers and officers executed today's warrants at that

restaurant and at BAEZ's Homestead Avenue home. Troopers took BAEZ into custody at the restaurant this morning and transported him to the State Police-Springfield Barracks for booking. He will be brought to Springfield District Court for arraignment. The case will be prosecuted by the office of Hampden District Attorney Anthony Gullini.

In all, the investigation suggests BAEZ used the fraudulently-obtained cards to purchase tens of thousands of dollars of food supplies. The exact total of the theft remains part of the ongoing investigation. The investigation is continuing and further law enforcement action is possible.

Agencies and units that participated in the investigation and arrests were the Massachusetts State Police C3 Policing Team, MSP Troop B Headquarters, MSP Detective Unit for Hampden County, MSP Violent Fugitive Apprehension Section, MSP Crime Scene Services Section, Holyoke Police, Springfield Police, the Hampden District Attorney's Office, and the Department of Transitional Assistance.