

Dominican National Pleads Guilty To Misusing Social Security Number And Stealing Government Benefits

A Dominican national pleaded guilty on Friday in federal court in Boston to false representation of a Social Security number and theft of public money.

Noemi Mejia, 51, pleaded guilty to false representation of a Social Security number and theft of public money. U.S. District Court Judge Nathaniel M. Gorton scheduled sentencing for July 16, 2019. Mejia was charged in May 2018 and released on conditions.

In August 2001, Mejia applied to participate in the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Section 8 Program, which is administered by the Boston Housing Authority, using the name, Social Security number, and date of birth of a U.S. citizen from Puerto Rico. By falsely claiming that she was a U.S. citizen, Mejia was deemed eligible to receive Section 8 benefits. Mejia also applied for MassHealth benefits using the identity of a Puerto Rican citizen, which rendered her eligible for more expansive healthcare coverage. Mejia also used the stolen identity to obtain a Massachusetts driver's license and to work.

While receiving benefits under the stolen identity, Mejia applied for and received additional Section 8 housing vouchers and Food Stamps using her true name. She received these benefits on behalf of her daughter, who is a United States citizen. The amount of the benefits received under these programs is determined, in part, by household income. Because Mejia did not report the income she earned using the stolen

identity, she fraudulently received Section 8 benefits and Food Stamps in her true name.

In total, Mejia stole more than \$164,000 in federally-funded housing assistance benefits, MassHealth benefits, and Food Stamps.

The charge of false representation of a Social Security number provides for a sentence of no greater than five years in prison, three years of supervised release, and a fine of \$250,000 or twice the gross gain or loss, whichever is greater. The charge of theft of public funds provides for a sentence of no greater than 10 years in prison, three years of supervised release, and a fine of \$250,000 or twice the gross gain or loss, whichever is greater. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling; Christina Scaringi, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of the Inspector General, Northeast Regional Office; Peter C. Fitzhugh, 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; and Suzanne M. Bump, State Auditor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, made the announcement today. Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Karen Burzycki of Lelling's Major Crimes Unit is prosecuting the case.