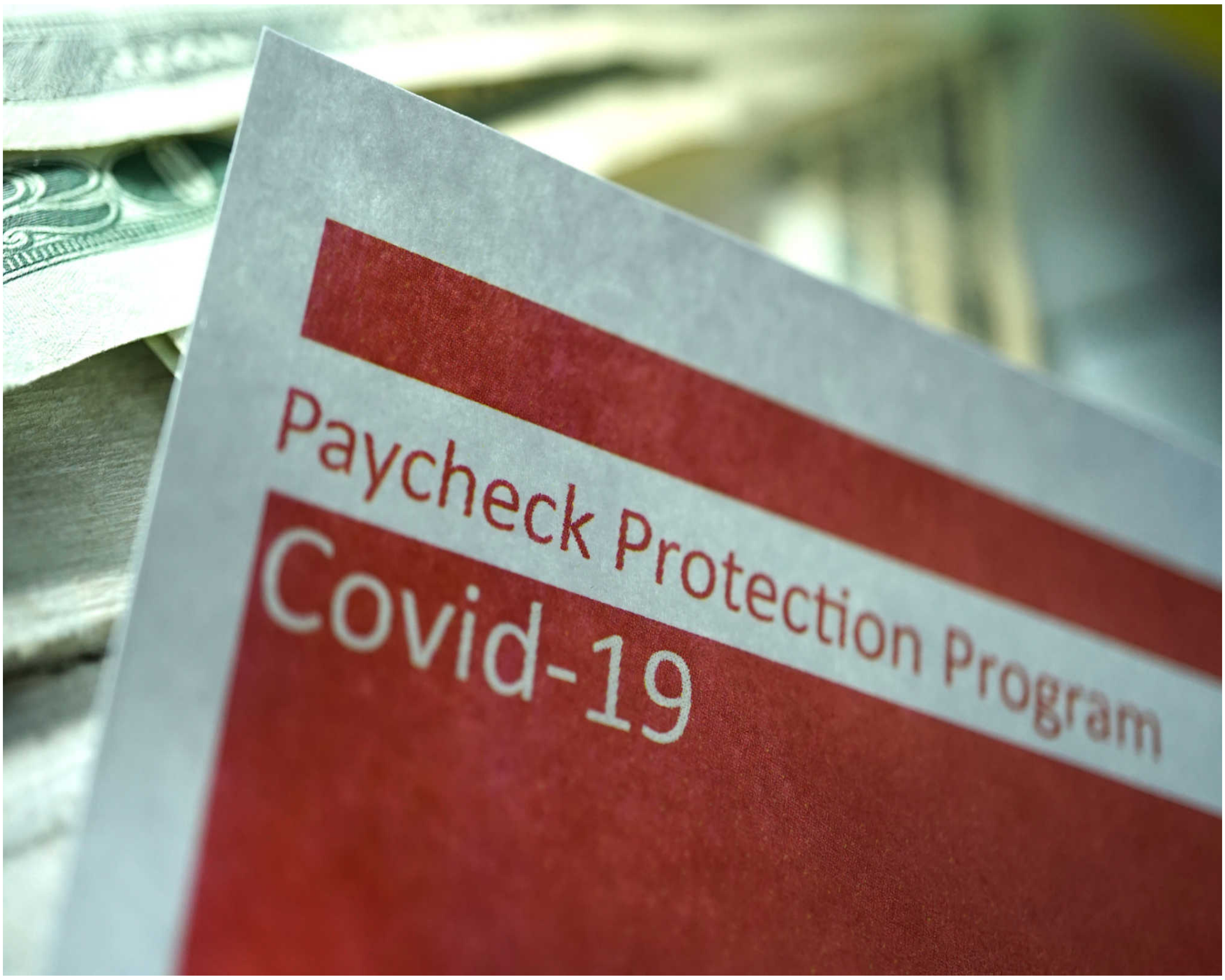
The Virgin Islands Consortium

Food Business Owner Sentenced to 33 Months, Ordered to Repay $383,000 She Stole From Paycheck Protection Program

Community Center / **Published On February 07, 2022 08:28 AM /**

Staff Consortium February 07, 2022



ST. THOMAS — U.S. Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert has announced that Mashama Ferdinand, 38, of St. Thomas was sentenced on Friday to 33 months incarceration by Judge Robert A. Molloy on her wire fraud conviction. Judge Molloy also order Ferdinand to pay $383,397.00 in restitution to the United States. Ferdinand was remanded to the custody of the United States Marshals, and upon release from prison, must serve a term of four years on supervised release.

According to court documents, on July 30, 2020, Ferdinand filed a PPP loan application on behalf of her company, Shama's Specialties. The application fraudulently claimed that Ferdinand employed 15 employees and earned a quarterly payroll of $460,079.82. Court documents further revealed that Ferdinand electronically submitted her PPP loan application to Bluevine, Inc., and hours later on July 30, 2020, Ferdinand's PPP loan application was approved in the amount of $383,397.00.

Court documents further show hat Bluevine's IP records revealed that Shama's Specialties application package was processed by unnamed co-conspirators in Apopka, FL. Thereafter, on August 3, 2020, Bluevine deposited the PPP loan proceeds in the amount of $383,397.00 in Shama's Specialties' First Bank Virgin Islands' checking account. On August 5, 2020, Ferdinand wired three separate payments in the amounts of $9,999.00, totaling $29,997.00, to three alleged co-conspirators as payment for their roles in processing her PPP loan application.

Ferdinand also spent approximately $12,000.00 on dental veneers and $3,000.00 to pay off an American Express business credit card. As of the date of sentencing, Ferdinand reported having less than $10,000.00 of the PPP loan proceeds remaining. Records obtained from the Virgin Islands Bureau of Internal Revenue confirmed that during 2019 and 2020, the period in which PPP loans were offered, no 501-VI nor 941-VI payroll records were filed on behalf of Shama's Specialties. Ferdinand applied for PPP funds on two prior occasions, the first of which she received $85.00, and on the second occasion, her application was denied.

This case was investigated by the United States Secret Service and Small Business Association Office of Inspector General and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Delia Smith.

"The Paycheck Protection Program was intended to provide a lifeline to the nation's small businesses and its employees," said Small Business Administration's Inspector General Michael H. Ware." "Our Office will remain relentless in the pursuit of fraudsters who seek to exploit SBA's vital economic programs. I want to thank the United States Attorney's Office and our law enforcement partners for their dedication and commitment to seeing justice served."