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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Attorney General James Uthmeier Announces Arrest of New York EBT Fraudster

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General James Uthmeier announced the arrest of Thajanhney Tapahrelle Thomas, 19, of Brooklyn, New York, for multiple felonies related to the unlawful use of Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) transfer cards. The card numbers Thomas allegedly used belonged to at least two Florida victims.

“When we announced our Public Assistance Fraud Task Force, we promised to safeguard the taxpayers’ investment in services meant for the vulnerable,” **said Attorney General James Uthmeier**. “Any criminals thinking about coming to Florida to commit crimes should think twice. This is not New York, and we will come at you with the full force of the law.”

“The Davie Police Department is appreciative of the support and collaboration with the Attorney General’s Office and our state law enforcement partners,” **said Davie Police Chief Stephen Kinsey**. “This partnership allowed Davie PD to arrest this prolific criminal who habitually committed fraud against numerous victims in more than one state. The message is clear, if you commit these crimes in Davie and in the State of Florida, we will identify you, investigate you, arrest you, and upon a conviction, ensure you go to prison.”

“Under the leadership of Attorney General Uthmeier and working hand-in-hand with corporate partners and local law enforcement, we have successfully apprehended EBT fraudsters,” **said Special Counsel Scott Strauss**. “This is only the tip of the iceberg. Stay tuned.”

A Walmart employee recognized a U-Haul in their parking that matched a recent alert regarding fraudulent EBT purchases of baby formula, and that two subjects exited the vehicle: a male later identified as Thomas, and an unidentified male accomplice.

Thomas was seen purchasing several containers of baby formula. Simultaneously, the unidentified subject selected a large quantity of other products. Thomas completed his transaction at the self-checkout, using two separate EBT cards.

As Thomas exited the store and headed toward the U-Haul, law enforcement recognized him from a dispatch and detained him. Thomas was in possession of a New York ID and two New York-issued EBT cards. Although the cards displayed different names, the rest of the information was identical. Further investigation confirmed the EBT accounts used for the purchase belonged to two different Florida residents.

Thomas was arrested by the Davie Police Department and subsequently booked in the Broward County Jail. Thomas' current charges include Unlawful Use of Food Assistance Benefits, Organized Scheme to Defraud, Communication's Fraud, Criminal Misuse of Personal Information, Use of Scanning device, skimming device, or reencoder to defraud; possession of a skimming device, and petit theft.

If convicted as charged, Thomas faces up to 21 years in the Florida Department of Corrections. The investigation is ongoing, and more charges are expected.

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