



PRESS RELEASE

Two Lenoir County Women Guilty in \$180K COVID Fraud Case

Monday, August 24, 2026

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District
of North Carolina

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WILMINGTON, N.C. – Two Lenoir County women, Kendra Edmondson, 39, and Britteny Dryer, 35, each pleaded guilty to Conspiracy to Commit Mail Fraud after they and others defrauded the federal government of more than \$187,000 by submitting fraudulent North Carolina Housing Opportunities and Prevention of Evictions (NC HOPE) loan applications for emergency rental assistance. As part of the scheme, the defendants and their associates submitted fictitious tenant lease agreements for multiple Lenoir County properties to support those applications. Each faces up to thirty years in federal prison and a \$1,000,000 fine when the court sentences them later this year.



“These two lowdown fraudsters chose to milk the system by lining their pockets while hardworking taxpayers rolled up their sleeves during the pandemic. Do what your parents taught you, don’t steal. Cheaters. Never. Win,” said U.S. Attorney Ellis Boyle.

Between November 2020 and December 2021, Edmondson, Dryer, and others submitted 23 fraudulent applications and collected more than \$187,000 in federal government housing funds for their personal benefit.

On March 27, 2020, Congress enacted the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to provide emergency financial assistance to millions of Americans suffering economically from the Covid-19 pandemic. The CARES Act authorized \$5 billion in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programs, giving states and localities flexible federal funding to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the pandemic. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers the CDBG program, which supports economic and community development and provides long-term recovery funding to states and localities during disasters and emergencies.

The State of North Carolina’s Office of Recovery and Resiliency (NCORR), a division of the North Carolina Department of Public Safety, used CARES Act federal funds to help North Carolina renters remain in their homes during COVID-19 by preventing evictions and loss of utility services. The NC HOPE program used an initial \$51.5 million allocation of CDBG funds

from the CARES Act to provide housing and utility assistance. North Carolina also received CRF funds from the CARES Act, including \$66 million allocated for administrative costs associated with the NC HOPE program.

"This case reflects the strength of our partnerships with the USAO-EDNC and HUD-OIG in fighting fraud, waste and abuse that hurts our most vulnerable citizens," said NCSBI Director, Chip Hawley. "Thanks also to USMS and the Kinston Police Department for their help. We will continue to aggressively target those who steal from hardworking taxpayers."

Ellis Boyle, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina made the announcement after Chief U.S. District Judge Richard E. Myers II accepted the plea. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development –OIG (USHUD-OIG), and NCSBI are investigating the case.

A copy of this press release is located on our [website](#). Related court documents and information can be found on the website of the [U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina](#) or on [PACER](#) by searching for Case No. 4:26-CR-14-M.

Updated August 24, 2026

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