

# Crowe Urges Fraud Victims To Come Forward, Help Bring Scammers To Justice

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MARYVILLE – Those who haven't applied for unemployment benefits but receive a debit card claiming to provide them could be the target of a scam, State Senator Rachelle Crowe (D-Glen Carbon) warned residents.

“It’s beyond disappointing scammers are targeting vulnerable residents and their unemployment benefits during this time of economic crisis,” Crowe said. “In an effort to bring scammers to justice, IDES is aggressively cracking down on fraudsters filing false claims.”

Last week, reports surfaced of individuals receiving KeyBank debit cards and unemployment letters in the mail, despite never having applied for benefits. According to IDES, people who received these erroneous mailings may be targets of fraud.

After receiving these reports, IDES launched an investigation into what appears to be a nationwide fraud scheme targeting applicants to the federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program. IDES said ambiguous federal guidelines—developed hastily to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic—leave PUA claimants open to attack. IDES maintains this scheme is not connected to the PUA program access issue experienced in May.

A dedicated team of staffers is now working directly with individuals whose identities are being used or have possibly been stolen. The department is also working with local and federal law enforcement authorities to pursue and prosecute those committing fraud.

Individuals who have received debit cards in the mail without applying for benefits should not activate them, and are urged to call IDES immediately at 1-800-814-0513 to report identity theft.

Victims of fraud should also check their credit reports for possible suspicious activity, post a fraud alert and visit the Federal Trade Commission's website for helpful tips on recognizing and reporting identity theft.