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Waste Watch: Former DHS Worker, Alleged Accomplice Accused of Food Stamp Fraud

by Alex J. Quinones

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WILSON COUNTY, Tenn. -- A former Tennessee Department of Human Services employee and her alleged accomplice are accused of falsifying at least 40 SNAP benefit accounts to profit from them.

A Tennessee Bureau of Investigation spokesperson said it amounts to at least \$170,000 in fraudulent benefits.

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"They are already working for the state I am sure they get paid pretty well," Elizabeth Wilson said, Smith County resident.

A Wilson County grand jury indicted the two on theft and conspiracy to commit theft on May 11th.

TBI agents believe former employee Tracey Deshaye Timbs tampered with government records and created false Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) accounts. Agents believe she supplied the EBT cards to 32-year-old Matthew Nichols, who then activated the EBT cards.

Investigators said the pair used the cards for personal benefit and sold the rest to friends and associates.

DHS eventually fired Timbs.

"That's taxpayers' money. You know?" Penny Gregory said, Smith County resident.

The 15th District Attorney General's office told FOX 17 the pair could face additional charges.

Timbs was released from jail after posting a \$2,500 bond. As of Thursday evening, Nichols is being held in the Wilson County jail on unrelated charges.

The Tennessee Department of Human Services emailed FOX 17 a statement in response to the investigation:

"The Department of Human Services is committed to ensuring benefits go to the families and children that need them. We also extend thanks to the TBI and DHS staff for all they have done on this investigation. Program integrity is a priority for the Department that will continue to be emphasized as we work to mitigate the risk of future instances of fraud, waste and abuse."

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