



John A. Carey
Inspector General

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
PALM BEACH COUNTY



Inspector General
Accredited

“Enhancing Public Trust in Government”

**Redacted per §119.071(5)(b) and (5)(f)1 F.S.,
and 15 U.S.C. §9058a (4)(A)**

Investigative Report

2022-0020

False Information on County Grant Applications by Lake Worth Applicant

April 29, 2024



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INVESTIGATIVE REPORT 2022-0020

DATE ISSUED: APRIL 29, 2024



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FALSE INFORMATION ON COUNTY GRANT APPLICATIONS BY LAKE WORTH APPLICANT

SUMMARY

WHAT WE DID

The Palm Beach County (County) Office of Inspector General (OIG) received a complaint from the Palm Beach County Community Services Department (Community Services) alleging that [REDACTED] ("Applicant") submitted applications for assistance with fraudulent employer letters to the County Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act – Coronavirus Relief Fund Rental, Utilities, and Food Assistance Program and Emergency Rental and Utilities Assistance Program (ERA Program).

Based on our initial review of Applicant's applications and accompanying documents, the OIG initiated an investigation of the following allegation:

Allegation (1): Applicant provided false information with her assistance applications, which resulted in improper grant funding from County programs.

Our office reviewed Applicant's assistance applications, supporting documents, and program guidelines. We also interviewed County employees, representatives from

Applicant's former employer and attempted to interview Applicant.

WHAT WE FOUND

Allegation (1) is supported. We found that Applicant submitted falsified documents to the County in support of her rental assistance applications.

As a result of her actions, the County approved four applications and issued a total of \$19,214.13 in funding. The inappropriate payments resulted in Identified Costs¹ of \$19,214.13.

We found sufficient information to warrant referring our findings to law enforcement (with a copy to the State Attorney's Office) for a determination of whether the facts arise to a criminal act under section 817.03, Florida Statutes.

We also found sufficient information to warrant notification of our findings to the United States Attorney's Office for a determination of whether they constitute a violation of Title 18, Chapter 47, section 1001, United States Criminal Code.

¹ Identified costs are costs that have been identified as dollars that have the potential of being returned to the entity to offset the taxpayers' burden.

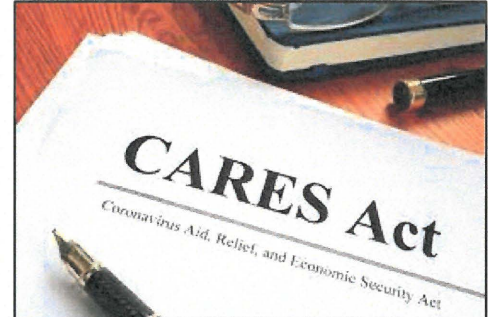
WHAT WE RECOMMEND

We make one recommendation; that the County seek reimbursement of \$19,214.13 in issued funds.

BACKGROUND

The CARES Act

On March 1, 2020, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis directed the State Health Officer to issue a public health emergency in the State of Florida due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 13, 2020, then-Palm Beach County Mayor Dave Kerner declared a state of emergency in the County due to COVID-19.



On March 27, 2020, the President signed the CARES Act into law. The CARES Act allocated \$2.2 trillion in economic relief to individuals, businesses, and governments affected by COVID-19. State governments were allocated a total of \$139 billion based on their populations (as measured by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2019), with no state receiving less than \$1.25 billion. Florida received a total of \$8.328 billion, with \$261,174,832 of that total provided to Palm Beach County.

On May 15, 2020, the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners dedicated \$40 million of the approximately \$261 million allocated to it for "Emergency Mortgage, Rental and Utility Assistance." Community Services administrated the Rental Assistance portion of this funding.

CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund Rental, Utilities, and Food Assistance Program Guidelines

The CARES Act - Coronavirus Relief Fund Rental, Utilities, and Food Assistance Program was designed to utilize CARES Act funds to provide one-time rental and utility assistance to eligible County residents who experienced loss of income, reduction in hours, or unemployment as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Community Services website explained that in order to be eligible for the Program, the applicant must reside within the corporate limits of Palm Beach County and have documentable information to evidence loss of income, reduction in hours, or unemployment because of the COVID-19 pandemic that contributed to missed rental payments and/or utility payments. Eligibility guidelines on the website also listed the income and asset requirements to qualify for the Program. Applicants were eligible for assistance for food, past due rent, and/or utilities due from March 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020.

Emergency Rental Assistance Program

On March 9, 2021, under the authority of the U.S. Department of Treasury Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) Program 1 (as established by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021) and 2 (as established by section 3201 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021), the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) approved ERA-1 funding to assist Palm Beach County residents affected by COVID-19 with rental and

utility assistance. On August 17, 2021, the BCC approved ERA-2 funding for the same purpose.

Eligible Palm Beach County households are renter households in which one or more individual(s) meets all of the following criteria:

- For ERA-1, qualifies for unemployment or experienced a reduction of household income, incurred significant costs, or experienced other financial hardships **due to** COVID-19 (either directly or indirectly), or for ERA-2, qualifies for unemployment or experienced other financial hardships **during or due to** (either directly or indirectly) COVID-19;
- Demonstrates a risk of homelessness or housing instability; and
- Has a household income at or below 80% of the area median.

Rental Assistance Applications

The County accepted applications electronically on the Community Services Online System for Community Access to Resources and Social Services (OSCARSS). OSCARSS required applicants to upload certain supporting documentation, including identification, a rental lease agreement, and a Balance Statement from the landlord. The Balance Statement was to be completed by the applicant's landlord or property manager and was to reflect the amount of rent owed by the applicant.



The form of the application differed slightly throughout the Program, but each included eligibility questions and acknowledgements. Applicants were required to affirm these statements by electronically checking a box next to each one. Applicants had to check each box every time they submitted or re-submitted an application.

The Acknowledgment section for applications No. 41034, 74969, 86243, and 106123 included the following:

- I further certify that I have read² the above information and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the information is accurate and has been properly recorded. Additionally, I understand that I am responsible for the accuracy of the information provided and that said information will be used as a basis for determining my eligibility for services. **I also understand that any falsification or misrepresentation of this information is just cause for denial of services and prosecution for fraud.** [Emphasis added]

The final page of the application required the applicant's electronic signature.

² In application No. 41034, there was a comma after the word "read."

Community Services assigned applications it received to a Community Services reviewer. The reviewer checked whether the applicant submitted all required information and that there were no discrepancies within the documents. If information was missing, or if information in submitted documents was inconsistent, the reviewer would return the application to the applicant, noting what was missing or inconsistent. If the applicant met the eligibility guidelines and submitted required documentation, and the applicant's landlord had registered or was in the process of registering with the County as a vendor, the reviewer would send the application to a supervisor for review.

Then, applications were sent to Community Services fiscal personnel. Upon the approval of an application for rental assistance, the County sent notice of approval and a request for payment to the County Clerk and Comptroller's Office for payment processing.

The County Clerk and Comptroller's Office paid funds directly to the applicant's landlord. In order to be paid, the landlord had to register as a vendor with the County. If not already registered, the County sent the landlord a link to a portal to complete the vendor registration process.

Property Records for [REDACTED], Lake Worth, Florida

Applications 41034, 74969, 86243, and 106123 were submitted on behalf of Applicant. Each of the applications listed Applicant's address as [REDACTED] Lake Worth, FL 33462.³ The Palm Beach County Property Appraiser's online database shows that Morguard Emerald Townhomes LLC has owned the property located at [REDACTED], Lake Worth, FL 33461 since January 2011.

ALLEGATIONS AND FINDINGS

Allegation (1):

Applicant provided false information with her assistance applications, which resulted in improper grant funding from County programs.

Governing Directives:

Palm Beach County CARES Act- Coronavirus Relief Fund Rental, Utilities, and Food Assistance Program application and program guidelines; Palm Beach County Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA-1 and ERA-2) Program application and program guidelines.

Finding:



The information obtained **supports** the allegation.

³ An OIG search of the United States Postal Service "Look Up a Zip Code" online tool shows that the zip code for Applicant's address is 33461. The leases submitted with Applicant's applications lists 33461 as the zip code for the rental property.

Rental, Food, and Utility Assistance Application 41034

County records show rental, food, and utility assistance application No. 41034 was electronically signed and submitted to the County on behalf of Applicant on November 9, 2020. The County returned the application to Applicant on November 10, 2020 and requested an updated lease. Applicant resubmitted the application on that same date.

Applicant listed her address as [REDACTED] Lake Worth, FL 33462 and her landlord as Emerald Vista Apartments. Applicant listed her monthly rent on application No. 41034 as \$1,907.00, but only requested \$1,400.00 in past due rental assistance. The lease contact between “Applicant” and “Morguard Emerald Apartments, LLC,” which was attached to the application, stated that the monthly rent amount was \$1,965.00 for October 2020 to August 2021. The Landlord Balance Statement attached to application No. 41034 lists the past due amount as \$1,947.00, to include rent and late fees. She also requested assistance for a past due electric bill of \$300.00, a past due water bill of \$96.00, and requested food assistance.

Additional Questions - Rental Assistance	
What is the Rent Due Date? *	10/01/2020
What is your Landlord's Name? *	Emerald Vista Apartments
What is your Landlord's Address? *	4495 emerald vista ste 1
What is your Landlord's Email Address? *	spolk@morguard.com
What is your Landlord's Phone Number? *	561-304-2557
What is your Monthly Rent Amount? *	\$1,907.00
Are you currently receiving section 8 or any federal housing subsidies? *	No
Did you receive a Rental Late or Eviction Notice? *	Yes
Have you received an eviction notice (issued after 3/15/2020) caused by the COVID-19 pandemic? *	No
What is the Rental Past Due Start Date? *	09/01/2020
What is the Rental Past Due End Date? *	11/01/2020
What is the Rental Past Due Amount Requested? *	\$1,400.00
Additional Questions - Home Energy Assistance	
What is the Electric Bill Due Date? *	10/02/2020
What is the Electric Company's Name? *	LAKE WORTH UTILITES (LAKE0023)
What is the Electric Company Account Number? *	226079-67750
Did you receive an Electric Bill Late Notice? *	Yes
What is the Electric Bill Due Start Date? *	09/05/2020
What is the Electric Bill Due End Date? *	11/01/2020
 <p style="text-align: center;">OSCARSS APPLICATION: 41034</p> 	
Additional Questions - Home Energy Assistance	
What is the Electric Bill Due Amount Requested? *	\$300.00
Is your Electric Bill in a household member's name? *	Yes
Is the Electric Bill in your name? *	Yes
Additional Questions - Water	
What is the Water Bill Due Date? *	11/04/2020
What is the Water Company's Name? *	PBC Water Utilities Dept. (PALM0425)
What is the Water Company Account Number? *	1000805238
Did you receive a Water Bill Late Notice? *	Yes
What is the Water Bill Due Start Date? *	09/01/2020
What is the Water Bill Due End Date? *	11/04/2020
What is the Water Bill Past Due Amount Requested? *	\$96.00
Is your Water Bill in a household member's name? *	Yes
Is the Water Bill in your name? *	Yes

Applicant attested that her crisis was COVID-19 related. In the Declaration of Crisis section of the application, she wrote “i (sic) was laid off back in may (sic) due to covid but was brought back wit (sic) limited hours.”

Declaration of Crisis (Please Explain the reason for your Crisis Situation below): *

i was laid off back in may due to covid but was brought back wit limited hours

Applicant submitted a letter dated November 6, 2020, with this application purporting to be from Palm Beach Diabetes & Endocrine Specialists, P.A. and signed by Amanda Wright in the “Hr (sic) Department.” The letter stated Applicant had been laid off due to COVID and rehired on a temporary basis, working approximately 15-20 hours per week.

PALM BEACH DIABETES & ENDOCRINE SPECIALISTS, P.A.
 1515 N. Flagler Drive, Suite 430 • West Palm Beach, FL 33401
 6056 Boynton Beach Blvd., Suite 245 • Boynton Beach, FL 33437
 550 Heritage Drive, Suite 150 • Jupiter, FL 33458
 1041 S. State Road 7, Suite 1 • Wellington, FL 33414
Telephone Number (561) 659-6336 Fax Number (561) 659-9353

William A. Kaye, M.D., F.A.C.P. Barry S. Horowitz, M.D., F.A.C.P. Gary M. Pepper, M.D., F.A.C.P. Shital R. Patel, M.D. Jaime Steinsapir, M.D., F.A.C.E. Kathryn Reynolds, M.D.	Kori C. Knudson, M.D., F.A.C.E. Gestanjali K. Kale, M.D., M.B.B.S. Maria E. Gutierrez, M.D., F.A.C.E. Leslie Cotto, M.D. Kathleen Kurit, MSN, FNP-C Stephanie Devaney, MSN, FNP-C
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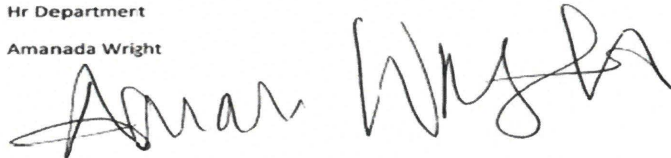
November 06, 2020

To whom this may concern, March 2nd, 2020 [redacted] was laid off due to budget cut due to covid, once covid started and the economy had dropped we could no longer cover the newly hired people we brought on so we was forced to let them go and unfortunately [redacted] as one of the people we had to let go, in weeks passing we decided to rehire [redacted] with the company but as a temp nurse on a as needed bases and once the economy fully picks back up we will proceed with giving her, her full time position back. Currently [redacted] working between 15-20 hours a week pay rate give or take depending on whats available for coverage with pay rate \$17 an hour.

If you have any questions or concern please feel free to give me a call.

561-659-6336 ext 8315

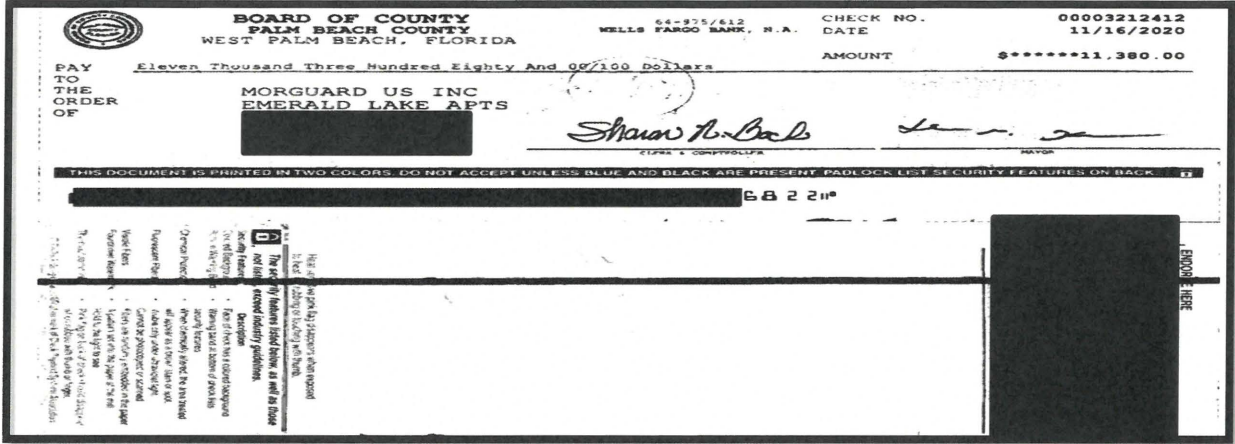
Hr Department
 Amanada Wright



Payment to Morguard US Inc. Emerald Lake Apartments

On November 11, 2020, the County processed the application. Although the lease contract attached to the application and the publicly available information on the Palm Beach County Property Appraiser’s website lists the owner of the apartment complex as “Morguard Emerald Apartments, LLC,” on November 16, 2020, the County issued check number 00003212412 in the amount of \$11,380.00 to “Morguard US Inc. Emerald Lake Apts.” The OSCARSS application log, handwritten notes on the check, and County

Advantage records show that \$4,024.00 of the total payment was for rental assistance for Applicant. It is unclear how the County calculated the total paid for rental assistance for Applicant.




County Advantage database records also show payments to Lake Worth Utilities on November 16, 2020 in the amount of \$524.66; to Palm Beach County Water Utilities Department on November 16, 2020 in the amount of \$213.97; and a food assistance payment of \$1,300.00 directly to Applicant on January 9, 2021.

Rental and Utility Assistance Application 74969


County records show assistance application number 74969 was electronically signed and submitted to the County on behalf of Applicant on May 4, 2021 seeking future rent for June, July, and August 2021. The County returned the application to Applicant on May 10, 2021, and requested her 2020 tax return. Applicant resubmitted the application on May 12, 2021. On that same date, the County again returned the application to Applicant for additional information, including proof of income. Applicant resubmitted the application on May 12, 2021.

On application 74969, Applicant listed her address as [REDACTED] Lake Worth, FL 33462, and her landlord as Emerald Lakes Apartments. Applicant attached the same lease that she attached to Application No. 41034, but this time, she listed her monthly rent as \$1,965.00 on her application, as reflected in the lease. Applicant also requested assistance for a past due electric bill of \$355.00 and a past due water bill of \$100.00. On May 20, 2021, the County processed the application.

What is your Landlord's Name?	emerald lakes apartments
What is your Landlord's Address?	4495 emerald vista suite 1
What is your Landlord's Email Address?	emeraldlake@morguard.com
What is your Landlord's Phone Number?	833-610-9764
What is your Monthly Rent Amount?	\$1,965.00
Are you currently receiving section 8 or any federal housing subsidies?	No
Did you receive a Rental Late or Eviction Notice?	Yes
Have you received an eviction notice (issued after 3/15/2020) caused by the COVID-19 pandemic?	Yes
What is the Rental Months Requested?	08/2021,07/2021,06/2021
What is the Rental Past Due Amount Requested?	\$6,000.00
What is the Rental Late Fees Amount Requested?	\$100.00
What is the Rental Total Amount Requested?	\$6,100.00
How many Bedrooms are in your Home?	3



OSCARSS APPLICATION: 74969



Additional Questions - Home Energy Assistance	
What is the Electric Bill Due Date?	04/04/2021
What is the Electric Company's Name?	LAKE WORTH UTILITES (LAKE0023)
What is the Electric Company Account Number?	226079-67750
Did you receive an Electric Bill Late Notice?	Yes
What is the Electric Bill Due Start Date?	04/04/2021
What is the Electric Bill Due End Date?	05/04/2021
What is the Electric Bill Due Amount Requested?	\$355.00
Is your Electric Bill in a household member's name?	Yes
Is the Electric Bill in your name?	Yes
What is the name on the Electric Bill?	
What is their relationship to you? (Person on Electric Bill)	
What is your Electricity Past Due Amount?	\$355.00

Additional Questions - Water	
What is the Water Bill Due Date?	04/02/2021
What is the Water Company's Name?	PBC Water Utilities Dept. (PALM0425)
What is the Water Company Account Number?	1000805238
Did you receive a Water Bill Late Notice?	Yes
What is the Water Bill Due Start Date?	04/01/2021
What is the Water Bill Due End Date?	05/01/2021
What is the Water Bill Past Due Amount Requested?	\$100.00
Is your Water Bill in a household member's name?	

Applicant attested that her crisis was COVID-19 related. In the Declaration of Crisis section of the application, she wrote "April of 2020 i (sic) was laid off my job due to covid... after about 3-4 months i (sic) was called back in offering me my position back but on a per deim (sic) basics (sic)..."

Declaration of Crisis (Please Explain the reason for your Crisis Situation below):

April of 2020 i was laid off my job due to covid, the company was no longer able to keep on the new people they have recently hired . after about 3-4 months i was called back in offering me my postion back but on a per deim basics witch means as needed. i continue to do that working anywhere between 0-20 hours a week depending when and where im needed covering between offices

With this application, Applicant submitted a letter dated May 5, 2021, purporting to be from Palm Beach Diabetes & Endocrine Specialists, P.A. and signed by Humana (sic) Resources Manager Denise Wilson. It stated Applicant had been laid off due to COVID, and rehired on a "per deim (sic) basics (sic)", working between 0- 20 hours per week.

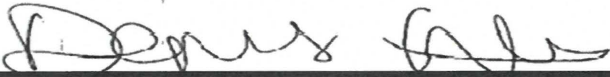
1515 N. Flagler Drive, Suite 430 • West Palm Beach, FL 33401
 6056 Boynton Beach Blvd, Suite 245 • Boynton Beach, FL 33437
 550 Heritage Drive, Suite 150 • Jupiter, FL 33458
 1041 State Road 7, Suite 1 • Wellington, FL 33414
 Telephone Number (561) 659-6336 Fax Number (561) 659-9353

William A. Kaye, M.D., F.A.C.P.	Kort C. Knudson, M.D., F.A.C.E.
Barry S. Horowitz, M.D., F.A.C.P.	Geetanjali K. Kale, M.D., M.B.B.S.
Gary M. Pepper, M.D., F.A.C.P.	Maria E. Gutierrez, M.D., F.A.C.E.
Shital R. Patel, M.D.	Leslie Cotto, M.D.
Jaime Steinsapir, M.D., F.A.C.E.	Kathleen Kurit, MSN, FNP-C
Kathryn Reynolds, M.D.	Stephanie Devaney, MSN, FNP-C

May 5th, 2021

To whom this may concern employee [REDACTED] has been with our company for little over a year, back in May of 2020 we had change of current events and had to let go some of our recent hires due to covid and unfortunately [REDACTED] was one of the employee, after about 3-4 months we reached out to Ms. [REDACTED] and offered her her position back but informed her it will be on a per deim basics until covid cases decrease and things start to pick back up. [REDACTED] agreed and has been working between 0-20 hours a week depending on where we need coverage again once covid cases decrease hours will pick up but for the time being we only have an part time position available for her witch sometimes leaves [REDACTED] weeks without getting a decent check we do pay [REDACTED] 56 cent per mile for traveling between offices. If you have any questions or concerns regarding [REDACTED] employment please feel free to give me a call 561-659-6336 ext 8307


Humana Resources Manager
 Denise Wilson




Payment to Morguard US Inc. Emerald Lake Apartments

On May 21, 2021, the County issued check number 00003240491 in the amount of \$5,895.00 to Morguard US Inc. Emerald Lake Apts for rental assistance for future rent for the months of June through August, 2021 for Applicant.

What is your Landlord's Name? *	emerald lakes apartments
What is your Landlord's Address? *	4495 emerald vista suite 1
What is your Landlord's Email Address? *	draguan@morguard.com
What is your Landlord's Phone Number? *	561-304-2557
What is your Monthly Rent Amount? *	\$2,031.00
Are you currently receiving section 8 or any federal housing subsidies? *	No
Did you receive a Rental Late or Eviction Notice? *	No
Have you received an eviction notice (issued after 3/15/2020) caused by the COVID-19 pandemic? *	No
What is the Rental Months Requested? *	11/2021,10/2021,09/2021
What is the Rental Past Due Amount Requested? *	\$2,031.00
What is the Rental Late Fees Amount Requested? *	\$0.00
What is the Rental Total Amount Requested? *	\$2,031.00
How many Bedrooms are in your Home? *	3



OSCARSS APPLICATION: 86243



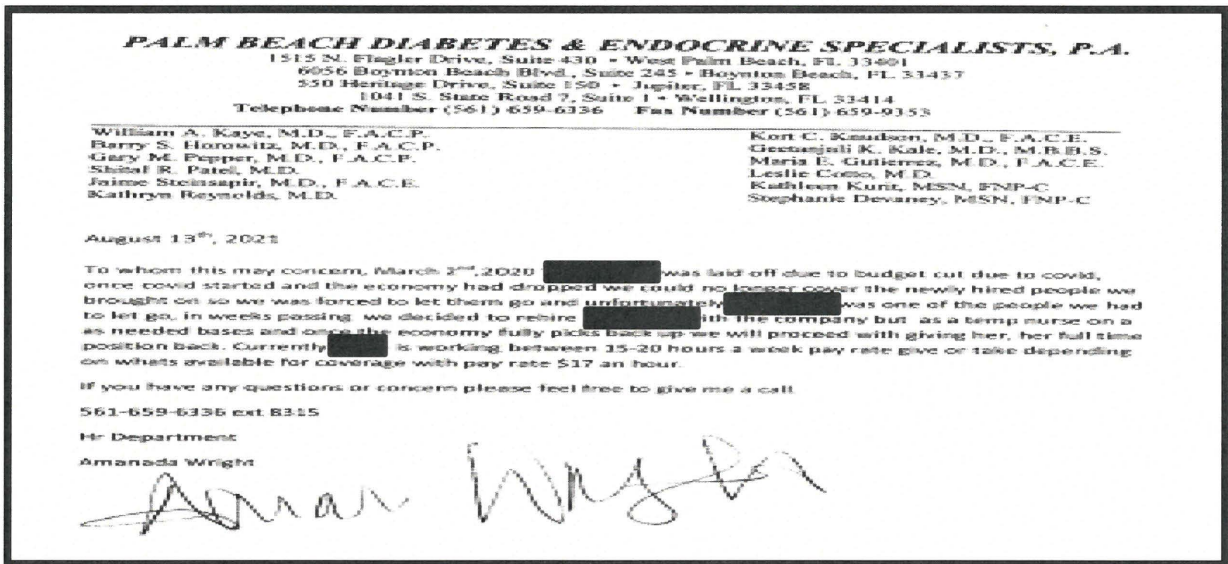
Additional Questions - Home Energy Assistance	
What is the Electric Bill Due Date? *	08/15/2021
What is the Electric Company's Name? *	LAKE WORTH UTILITES (LAKE0023)
What is the Electric Company Account Number? *	226079-67750
Did you receive an Electric Bill Late Notice? *	Yes
What is the Electric Bill Due Start Date? *	07/01/2021
What is the Electric Bill Due End Date? *	08/01/2021
What is the Electric Bill Due Amount Requested? *	\$260.00

Applicant attested that her crisis was COVID-19 related. In the Declaration of Crisis section of the application, she wrote “since the start of covid i (sic) have been per dem (sic)... im (sic) working on an as needed basis...”

Declaration of Crisis (Please Explain the reason for your Crisis Situation below): *

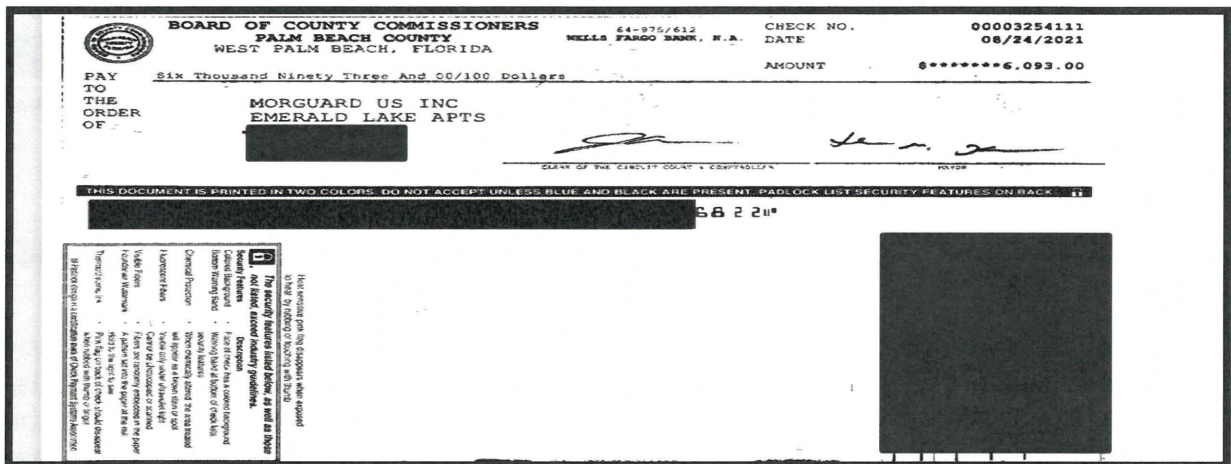
since the start of covid i have been per dem on my current job im working on an a needed basis until things pick back up

With this application, Applicant submitted a letter dated August 13, 2021, purporting to be from Palm Beach Diabetes & Endocrine Specialists, P.A. and signed by Amanda Wright in the “Hr (sic) Department.” With the exception of having a different date, the content of this letter is the same as the letter dated November 6, 2020 that Applicant previously submitted with application 41034.



Payment to Morguard US Inc. Emerald Lake Apartments

On August 24, 2021, the County issued check number 00003254111 in the amount of \$6,093.00 to Morguard US Inc Emerald Lake Apts for rental assistance for Applicant.



County Advantage database records also show a payment to Lake Worth Utilities on August 24, 2021 in the amount of \$478.66.


Rental and Utility Assistance Application 106123

County records show assistance application number 106123 was electronically signed and submitted to the County on behalf of Applicant on November 24, 2021. Applicant listed her address as [redacted] Lake Worth, FL 33462, and her landlord as Emerald Lakes Apartments. Applicant listed her monthly rent as \$2,095.00, and requested future rental assistance for December 2021 through February 2022. She also


requested electric bill assistance of \$351.00 and assistance for a past-due water bill of \$100.00.

Applicant attested that her crisis was COVID-19 related. In the Declaration of Crisis section of the application, she wrote “Due to covid things have been extremely hard for me to get back on my feet, due to reduce (sic) hours at work as well as staying home with smaller kids due to no daycare ect (sic).”

What is your Landlord's Name?	emerald lakes apartments
What is your Landlord's Address?	4495 emerald vista suite 1
What is your Landlord's Email Address?	spol@emorguard.com
What is your Landlord's Phone Number?	561-304-2557
What is your Monthly Rent Amount?	\$2,095.00
Are you currently receiving section 8 or any federal housing subsidies?	No
Did you receive a Rental Late or Eviction Notice?	No
Have you received an eviction notice (issued after 3/15/2020) caused by the COVID-19 pandemic?	No
What is the Rental Months Requested?	02/2022,01/2022,12/2021
What is the Rental Past Due Amount Requested?	\$2,095.00
What is the Rental Late Fees Amount Requested?	\$0.00
What is the Rental Total Amount Requested?	\$2,095.00
How many Bedrooms are in your Home?	3



OSCARSS APPLICATION: 106123



Additional Questions - Home Energy Assistance	
What is the Electric Bill Due Date?	11/15/2021
What is the Electric Company's Name?	LAKE WORTH UTILITES (LAKE0023)
What is the Electric Company Account Number?	225079-57750
Did you receive an Electric Bill Late Notice?	Yes
What is the Electric Bill Due Start Date?	11/02/2021
What is the Electric Bill Due End Date?	11/30/2021
What is the Electric Bill Due Amount Requested?	\$351.00
Is your Electric Bill in a household member's name?	Yes
Is the Electric Bill in your name?	Yes
What is the name on the Electric Bill?	
What is their relationship to you? (Person on Electric Bill)	
What is your Electricity Past Due Amount?	\$177.00

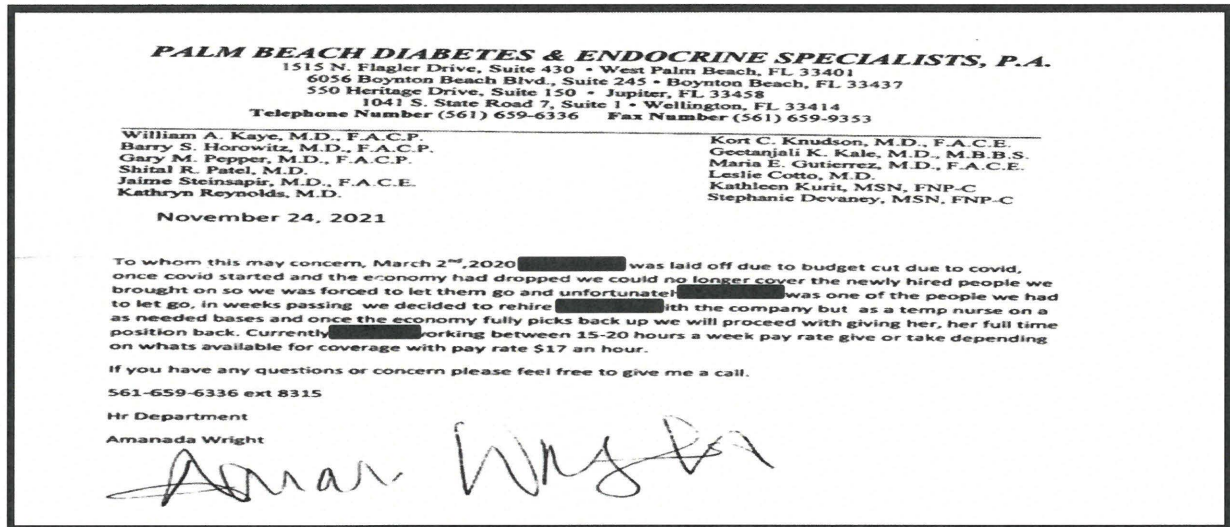
Additional Questions - Water	
What is the Water Bill Due Date?	11/15/2021
What is the Water Company's Name?	City of Boynton Beach Utilities Department (VC0000153517)
What is the Water Company Account Number?	1000805238
Did you receive a Water Bill Late Notice?	Yes
What is the Water Bill Due Start Date?	11/02/2021
What is the Water Bill Due End Date?	11/30/2021
What is the Water Bill Past Due Amount Requested?	\$100.00

Declaration of Crisis (Please Explain the reason for your Crisis Situation below): *

Due to covid things have been extremely hard for me to get back on my feet, due to reduce hours at work as well as staying home with smaller kids due to no daycare ect.

With this application, Applicant submitted a letter dated November 24, 2021, purporting to be from Palm Beach Diabetes & Endocrine Specialists, P.A. and signed by Amanda Wright in the HR Department. With the exception of having a different date, the content

of this letter is the same as the letters Applicant previously submitted with applications 41034 and 86243.



On December 13, 2021, the County made payments in the amount of \$340.49 for utility assistance and \$46.99 for water, for a total of \$387.48 in assistance. However, on December 15, 2021, Applicant's request for rental assistance was denied. The application log notes that it was denied because the County "...confirmed with Employer the letter attached is not legitimate."

OIG Interview of Suzanne Green, Palm Beach Diabetes and Endocrine Specialists Administrator

Ms. Green told the OIG that the letters purportedly from Palm Beach Diabetes & Endocrine Specialists dated November 6, 2020, May 5, 2021, August 13, 2021, and November 24, 2021, that Applicant submitted to the County were fraudulent. She said that the signers of those letters, Amanda Wright and Denise Wilson, have never worked for the company. Ms. Green stated that Applicant had worked for the company until December of 2021, and that phone extension [REDACTED] which was listed on three of the letters as the contact number for Amanda Wright, was actually Applicant's extension when she worked for the company. Ms. Green also stated the company did not reduce the hours or furlough any employees, including Applicant, due to COVID-19.

OIG Interview of Karen Parker, Palm Beach Diabetes and Endocrine Specialists Administrative Assistant

Ms. Parker is a Human Resources Administrative Assistant for Palm Beach Diabetes and Endocrine Specialists. She stated she has worked there for about 20 years. Ms. Parker told the OIG that Applicant had been an employee of Palm Beach Diabetes and Endocrine Specialists but was terminated from employment in December of 2021 after the County contacted the company and inquired about letters on company letterhead. The letters had

been signed with the names of individuals who had never worked for the company and contained false assertions that Applicant's hours had been reduced.

Interview of Applicant

The OIG telephonically contacted Applicant to schedule an interview. Applicant confirmed that she received assistance from the County in 2020 and that her final application had been denied. She agreed to an interview with the OIG; however, she did not appear for her scheduled interview and did not respond to subsequent efforts by the OIG to contact her.

OIG Conclusion

Applicant submitted four COVID-19 grant assistance applications. On each occasion, she attested that she provided accurate information to the County.

Based upon our review of documents and the statements of Applicant's former employer, we found that Applicant submitted applications with fabricated employment letters falsely claiming that her work hours had been reduced as a result of COVID-19.

As a result of the false information Applicant provided in her applications, the County issued a total of \$19,214.13 in grant funding.

The allegation that Applicant provided false information in her assistance applications is **supported**.

IDENTIFIED, QUESTIONED, AND AVOIDABLE COSTS

Identified Costs: \$19,214.13

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Inspector General's Investigations Division would like to thank the Palm Beach County Community Services Department staff for their cooperation throughout this investigation.

RECOMMENDED CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

We make one recommendation; that the County seek reimbursement of \$19,214.13 in issued funds.

RESPONSE FROM MANAGEMENT

Pursuant to Article XII, Section 2-427 of the Palm Beach County Code, Community Services was provided the opportunity to submit a written explanation or rebuttal to the findings as stated in this Investigative Report within ten (10) calendar days. The County's

written response is: "We concur with the recommendations and will pursue recouping the funds."

RESPONSE FROM SUBJECT

Pursuant to Article XII, Section 2-427 of the Palm Beach County Code, Applicant was provided the opportunity to submit a written explanation or rebuttal to the finding as stated in the Investigative Report within ten (10) calendar days. Applicant did not provide a response.

This Investigation has been conducted in accordance with the ASSOCIATION OF INSPECTORS GENERAL Principles & Quality Standards for Investigations.