



MEDIA RELEASE

Investigative Unit

Ohio Investigative Unit • Robert W. Booker Jr., Executive Director
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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OIU CITES CLEVELAND-AREA MARKET WITH FOOD STAMP FRAUD VIOLATIONS

(Columbus) – A Cleveland-area market has been administratively cited and may possibly face criminal charges for participating in illegal food stamp fraud activities.

Undercover agents with the Ohio Investigative Unit (OIU) executed a search warrant on Feb. 18 at Jai Ambaji, Inc., also known as Hometown Grocery, 5611 Woodland Ave., in Cleveland. The search warrant was obtained after agents investigated a complaint that Hometown Grocery was allowing recipients to purchase alcohol and tobacco using an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card.

“Food stamp fraud is a crime impacting individuals and families who need assistance,” said OIU Executive Director Robert W. Booker, Jr. “Food stamp fraud is also deceitful to taxpayers and therefore it’s important to hold people accountable.”

During the search warrant execution, agents seized: \$7,605; EBT cards; Women, Infant and Children (WIC) coupons; cell phones; bootleg DVDs; and drug paraphernalia.

Agents cited the liquor permit establishment with administrative charges, including three counts each of illegal use of EBT, trafficking in EBT and theft offense. They were also cited for illegal possession of EBT, drug paraphernalia possession and receiving stolen property. Administrative charges will be presented to the Ohio Liquor Control Commission, where penalties may include liquor permit revocation, suspension or fine.

Possible criminal charges will be presented to the Cuyahoga County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office at a later date.

Law enforcement officials with the United States Department of Agriculture also participated in the search warrant execution.

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The Ohio Investigative Unit is a division of the Ohio Department of Public Safety. Agents are undercover sworn peace officers who enforce the state’s liquor and tobacco laws, as well as food stamp fraud. Individuals who believe food stamp fraud is being committed are encouraged to contact OIU toll-free at 1-877-4MINORS. All complaints will remain anonymous.