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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**JONATHAN S. GONZALEZ, NEW YORK, NEW YORK, SENTENCED TO
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
FOR CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT IDENTITY THEFT**

Michael C. Carr, Jackson County State's Attorney, announced today that Jonathan S. Gonzalez, 29, of New York, New York, pled guilty to Conspiracy to Commit Identity Theft and Possession of a Counterfeit Debit Card and was sentenced to the Illinois Department of Corrections.

On January 8, 2016, officers with the Carbondale Police Department were dispatched to Verizon on East Main Street, Carbondale, Illinois, for the report of suspicious activity. Officers and Detectives learned that the co-defendant, Brian Paul Rivera, had entered the Verizon store and purchased approximately \$1,700.00 worth of merchandise. The merchandise was charged to a Verizon account owned by an individual living in the State of Arizona. Rivera presented an Arizona identification card which bore his photograph, but displayed the name and address of the victim in Arizona. Staff called the victim in Arizona, who confirmed that the purchase was fraudulent and that his identification had been stolen.

Shortly after the defendant exited Verizon, another individual entered the store and attempted to purchase merchandise on an account owned by a person in Connecticut. This individual, ultimately identified as the defendant Jonathan Gonzalez, presented a Connecticut identification card in the name of the victim in Connecticut.

Officers made contact with Rivera in a vehicle outside of the Verizon store. Upon making contact, officers recovered the fictitious identification card and the merchandise fraudulently purchased from Verizon. Upon searching Rivera's vehicle, officers located additional stolen identities, including names and social security numbers for other victims. Gonzalez was apprehended as he was exiting the Verizon store.

Detectives also seized Rivera's cellular phone and later executed a search warrant on that phone. Detectives recovered a large amount of information which implicated Rivera and Gonzalez as being involved in a large conspiracy involving identity theft. Detectives learned that Rivera and Gonzalez began traveling from the State of New York on January 2, 2016. During their travels, Rivera was in communication with at least three other individuals involved in the conspiracy who are believed to be residents of New York. A number of stolen identities were sent to Rivera for the purpose of targeting Verizon locations and using those stolen identities to fraudulently purchase merchandise on the victims'

Verizon accounts. That merchandise would later be sold for cash and the proceeds would be distributed to the people involved in the conspiracy. Detectives recovered information that similar stops were made in the States of Kentucky and Indiana, as well as Marion, Illinois.

During the investigation, Detectives recovered evidence from Rivera's phone, such as photographs of identification cards, addresses, social security numbers, etc. from approximately twenty-two victims, including victims from Illinois as well as a number of other states throughout the country. Contact was made with those victims, and a large number of them confirmed fraudulent activity on their Verizon accounts. Detectives also recovered a counterfeit debit card in Gonzalez's possession, which had the name of the victim from Connecticut embossed on the face of the card.

On March 22, 2016, Jonathan Gonzalez entered an open plea to Conspiracy to Commit Identity Theft, a Class 3 Felony; and Possession of a Counterfeit Debit Card, a Class 4 Felony. A sentencing hearing was held on June 1, 2016. Following that sentencing hearing, Gonzalez was sentenced to four (4) years in the Illinois Department of Corrections for the Conspiracy charge and one (1) year in the Illinois Department of Corrections for the Counterfeit Debit Card charge. He will have to serve a one (1) year period of Mandatory Supervised Release upon his release from the Department of Corrections. Additionally, the Court recommended placement of the defendant in the Impact Incarceration Program within the Department of Corrections.

Brian Rivera was previously sentenced on March 23, 2016, following a guilty plea to Conspiracy to Commit Identity Theft, a Class 3 Felony. He was sentenced to four (4) years in the Illinois Department of Corrections. He will serve a one (1) year period of Mandatory Supervised Release upon his release from the Department of Corrections.

The investigation was conducted by the Carbondale Police Department. Assistant State's Attorney Casey Bloodworth was responsible for the prosecution of this case.