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CRIME

Quakertown woman gets county jail sentence for mail-in ballot fraud



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A Quakertown woman will spend the next few months in county jail for committing voter fraud by signing her dead mother's name on a mail-in ballot during the 2020 election.

On Monday, Melissa Ann Fisher, 53, was sentenced to three to 23 months in Bucks County Correctional Facility, as well as three years of probation, for mail-in ballot fraud, as well as two unrelated theft cases. All charges are misdemeanors.

Presiding Judge Wallace Bateman Jr. said her mail-in fraud "undermined" democracy.

"For some reason you thought your vote was more important than everybody else's," he said.

Fisher was charged in April last year after investigators had determined she signed for her mother's mail-in ballot on Oct. 7, 2020. Her mother died on Sept. 21, 2020, according to the Bucks County District Attorney's Office.

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Investigators used a handwriting analysis to confirm that she signed for her dead mother, the DA's office said.

Fisher did not speak about the incident during her hearing Monday.

Fisher also pleaded guilty to a May 2020 theft out of Richland Township, and a June 2021 theft from Quakertown, according to court records. Fisher told Bateman that she has been undergoing treatment since last summer in response to her actions. She has impulse control issues, her attorney Paul Mallis said.

Fisher is a therapist and has several patients. People she had helped testified to her character during the hearing Monday. They said she helped a lot of different people with addiction treatment, they said.

"She's helped me overcome a lot," one man said.

Bateman did read a statement from one of the victims in the theft case, who considered Fisher a regular at the store she stole from.

"You'd steal from someone you know," the judge said.

Her attorney pushed for a form of home confinement so she could still assist her patients. The judge believed a level of incarceration was appropriate.

Mallis also asked to have her incarceration date moved. Bateman declined that.

"Today's the day," he said. "She's had plenty of notice."