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DOI STATEMENT ON PRISON SENTENCE OF FORMER HRA ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR ON THEFT CHARGES

The New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI") released the following statement on today's sentencing of SANDRA GARCIA, 57, a former Acting Deputy Director at the City Human Resources Administration ("HRA"), for using at least two fraudulent HRA public assistance cases to steal more than \$200,000 in public benefits. Today, United States District Judge Paul A. Crotty sentenced Garcia to 54 months in federal prison and three years of probation. GARCIA is to surrender on March 10, 2014. GARCIA pleaded guilty in July 2013 to Theft of Government Funds, Theft Concerning Programs Receiving Federal Funds and Aggravated Identity Theft. DOI investigated the case, which was prosecuted by the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York.

DOI's investigation found that in 1996 GARCIA opened at least two cases at the HRA center where she worked. One of the cases was repeatedly closed because the purported client did not appear for recertifications. The same case was then reopened despite the lack of supporting documentation, and lack of face-to-face contacts in violation of HRA policy. The investigation found the address and household composition of the case changed numerous times, as many as nine children were claimed as beneficiaries, and that at least one child was denied legitimate benefits due to being claimed fraudulently. The investigation also found that several of the children listed on the fraudulent cases were living with their mother in Mexico for the entire time of the fraud. The defendant accessed the case records at least 625 times, including numerous occasions before and after the case was reopened and/or recertified. DOI's investigation found that as a result of this conduct, between 1996 and 2009, the defendant obtained more than \$200,000 in public assistance benefits, including food stamps, cash assistance and other benefits.

GARCIA began HRA employment in July 1987 and at the time of her retirement in August 2009 she was an Acting Deputy Director of an HRA Center in Long Island City, which primarily served homeless clients, and was receiving an annual salary of approximately \$68,125. GARCIA retired to Puerto Rico shortly after being approached by DOI regarding the above allegations. GARCIA was consequently arrested by U.S. Department of Justice agents in Puerto Rico.

DOI thanks Preet Bharara, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and HRA Acting Commissioner Kathleen Carlson, and their staffs, for their assistance and cooperation on this investigation.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Edward A. Imperatore and Micah W.J. Smith of the office of the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York prosecuted the case.

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for HRA.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country. The agency investigates and refers for prosecution City employees and contractors engaged in corrupt or fraudulent activities or unethical conduct. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City.

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