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Attorney General James and Comptroller DiNapoli Announce Guilty Plea of Former New York City Council Candidate Albert Alvarez in Straw Donation Scheme

NEW YORK - Attorney General Letitia James and New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli today announced that former New York City Council candidate Albert Alvarez pleaded guilty to Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the Second Degree, a class A misdemeanor, in the Supreme Court of New York County. Alvarez previously served as Chief of Staff to New York City Council Majority Leader Joel Rivera. In 2013, Alvarez ran for Rivera's seat in the 15th New York City Council District, but he was unsuccessful in the Democratic primary. While running for office, Alvarez knowingly accepted straw donations orchestrated by George Gonzalez and Anna Mendez, two employees of a Bronx non-profit organization called Tremont Crotona Day Care Center.

"In New York, corruption is never acceptable, and offenders will always be brought to justice for their misdeeds," said **Attorney General Letitia James**. "Albert Alvarez knowingly deceived hardworking New Yorkers, stole public funds, and took advantage of our democratic process. We are committed to protecting public integrity and will use every tool at our disposal to root out corruption and hold bad actors accountable."

"Mr. Alvarez thought he could game New York City's public campaign finance system through straw donations," said **State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli**. "Thanks to my partnership with Attorney General Letitia James and the New York City Department of Investigations, his scheme was exposed and he is being held accountable. I thank Attorney General James and Commissioner Margaret Garnett for their continued commitment to working with my office to combat corruption."

"There is no room in government for politicians who undermine the integrity and independence of elections, particularly by submitting fraudulent records to the Campaign Finance Board and ultimately stealing taxpayer funds, as was the case in this straw donor scheme," said **New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Margaret Garnett**. "With today's guilty plea, a onetime candidate for elected office now stands convicted of a crime. DOI will continue to work with the Office of the State Attorney General, the Office of the State Comptroller, and all our partners to protect the election process and government funds."

Gonzalez and Mendez were arraigned for their roles in the false filings on a separate felony complaint on January 10, 2018. Mendez and Gonzalez are alleged to have provided funds to other employees of Tremont Crotona Day Care Center to contribute to Alvarez. Gonzalez also distributed contribution cards to these employees, which he had

them falsely make out in their own names to conceal the true source of the funds. The money was, in reality, stolen from Tremont Crotona Day Care Center. Alvarez then collected the money and false contribution cards. Even though he knew the contribution cards were false, Alvarez submitted them to the New York City Campaign Finance Board (the “CFB”) to steal at least \$4,500 in public matching funds. In total, Alvarez received \$92,400 in public matching funds. Alvarez agreed to pay back \$10,450 in restitution and fines as part of his plea deal.

The charges filed in this case are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.

Since 2011, the Attorney General and State Comptroller have worked together to fight corruption through their Joint Task Force on Public Integrity. They have brought charges against dozens of individuals implicated in public corruption schemes around the state – resulting in the return of over \$11 million in restitution to taxpayers through these convictions.

The Attorney General would also like to thank the New York City Department of Investigation for their partnership on this investigation.

Prosecuting the case are Assistant Attorneys General Kevin B. Frankel and Gregory D. Morrill of the Attorney General’s Public Integrity Bureau, under the supervision of Deputy Bureau Chief Stacy Aronowitz. The Criminal Justice Division is led by Executive Deputy Attorney General José Maldonado. The investigation was led by Investigator Steven Broomer of the Attorney General’s Investigations Bureau, under the supervision of Supervising Investigator Mike Leahy and Deputy Chief Investigator John McManus. Legal Support Analyst Rachel Demma of the Public Integrity Bureau also assisted in the investigation. Comptroller DiNapoli’s investigation was conducted by his Division of Investigations.

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