

February 25, 2020

## **Attorney General James, Comptroller DiNapoli, And Department Of Investigation Commissioner Garnett Announce Sentencing In Straw Donation Scheme**

*Anna Mendez, Formerly of Tremont Crotona Day Care Center, Sentenced to 5 years' Probation*

NEW YORK – Attorney General Letitia James, State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli, and New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Margaret Garnett today announced the sentencing of non-profit executive Anna Mendez for the misuse of nonprofit funds to fund straw political donations to former New York City Council candidate Albert Alvarez.

Today in New York County Supreme Court, Mendez was sentenced to 5 years' probation.

"Anna Mendez misused thousands of dollars intended to aid our youngest and most vulnerable new Yorkers," said **Attorney General James**. "Public corruption in any form will never be tolerated, and my office remains committed to holding bad actors across the state accountable. I thank the offices of the New York State Comptroller and the New York City Department of Investigation for their continued commitment to justice."

"Our electoral process is jeopardized when people like Ms. Mendez scheme to undermine laws to fund candidates," said **New York State Comptroller DiNapoli**. "Thanks to our partnership with Attorney General James and the New York City Department of Investigations, Ms. Mendez now faces justice and has been held accountable for her actions."

"Corrupting the election process is a crime that deserves a serious penalty," said **New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Margaret Garnett**. "This defendant exploited New York City's campaign finance system by misappropriating monies from a City-funded nonprofit and using them to support straw campaign donations. DOI was pleased to work with the state Attorney General and state Comptroller on this important investigation."

On October 28, 2019, Mendez was convicted of 10 counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a class E felony. Mendez and her co-conspirator, George Gonzalez, were arraigned for their roles in the false filings on January 10, 2018. Mendez and Gonzalez 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. 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 plead guilty to one count of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the Second Degree, a Class A misdemeanor in connection with the case.

Gonzalez also pleaded guilty to felony counts of Grand Larceny and Offering a False Instrument for filing in connection with his role in the straw donation scheme. Additionally, former Tremont Crotona, Inc., Chairman of the Board, Alexander Pena, pled guilty to Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree for his role in corruption at the non-profit.

Since 2011, the Office of the Attorney General and the Office of the State Comptroller have worked together to fight corruption through their Joint Task Force on Public Integrity.

The Attorney General would also like to thank the New York City Department of Investigation for their partnership on this investigation. The case was investigated by First Deputy Inspector General Ivette Morales under the supervision of Inspector General Andrew Sein, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella, and First Deputy Commissioner Daniel Cort.

Prosecuting the case are Assistant Attorneys General Kevin B. Frankel and Gregory D. Morril of the Attorney General's Public Integrity Bureau, under the supervision of Bureau Chief Travis Hill. The Criminal Justice Division is led by Executive Deputy Attorney General Jose 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. Senior Legal Support Analyst Rachel Demma and Legal Analyst Jack Jones of the Public Integrity Bureau also assisted in the investigation.