



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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**STATEMENT FROM DOI COMMISSIONER MARGARET GARNETT ISSUED ON DECEMBER 31, 2019
IN RESPONSE TO REPORTERS' INQUIRIES REGARDING DOI'S BACKGROUND BACKLOG**

The following is a statement from DOI Commissioner Margaret Garnett:

In January 2019, shortly after taking office as DOI Commissioner, I recognized the serious issue I inherited involving a significant backlog in DOI's Background Investigation Unit of approximately 6,000 applicant files, some dating back to 2015. Thousands of background investigations had not even begun and City hiring agencies were not receiving crucial background information expeditiously, despite the fact that most City employees subject to a background investigation begin working before their background investigation is cleared. It was clear to me that this situation was urgent and we began to take immediate steps to assess and address it. We devoted additional resources to background investigations through a rotation of incoming staff, and requested additional new resources to address the existing backlog. With additional staffing provided by City Council in the most recent budget process, we completely reorganized the Background Investigation Unit, creating two teams, effective July 1 of 2019. One team is dedicated to ensuring that, going forward, we are meeting our obligations to City agencies in a timely way and not adding to the existing backlog. That team operates with the goal of completing all background investigations in less than six months. I am proud to say that to date we are on track with those goals. A second team is dedicated to clearing the backlog. In the past six months alone, this talented team has cleared over 1,000 applicant files.

Mr. Hay was part of the inherited set of approximately 6,000 backlogged background files. Although it is not clear whether a completed background investigation would have revealed information relevant to the current charge against Mr. Hay, the risks presented by this example are exactly why I took immediate steps to assess and then reorganize the Background Investigation Unit. However, reducing a 6,000 file backlog takes time. We are continuously evaluating the process to see if there are additional improvements that can be made, and will assess the Hay situation to see if it illuminates any broadly-applicable issues. Finally, DOI background investigations gather the facts regarding issues like tax compliance, previous arrests, and the truthfulness of a candidate's claimed work history and educational background. Our investigations enhance a hiring agency's internal hiring process but do not supplant it, meaning the hiring agency can and should be conducting its own standard review that may include reference checks and requiring other information from a candidate.

We are addressing the existing backlog as aggressively as possible with the resources we have and will continue to do so. Moreover, we have made significant reforms to ensure new background investigations are completed in a timely manner. Background investigations are confidential; therefore, DOI will not comment on specifics regarding Mr. Hay's background.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country and New York City's corruption watchdog. 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. DOI's strategy attacks corruption comprehensively through systemic investigations that lead to high-impact arrests, preventive internal controls and operational reforms that improve the way the City runs.

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