



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

MARGARET GARNETT
COMMISSIONER

180 MAIDEN LANE
NEW YORK, NY 10038
212-825-5900

Release #12-2021
nyc.gov/doi

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 11, 2021**

**CONTACT: DIANE STRUZZI
(212) 825-5931**

HRA SUPERVISOR AND BROOKLYN RESIDENT CHARGED TODAY IN CONNECTION WITH STEALING FUNDS FROM THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ("SNAP")

Margaret Garnett, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced the arrest today of a Principal Administrative Associate with the City Human Resources Administration ("HRA") and a Brooklyn resident in connection with the fraudulent issuing and use of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ("SNAP") benefits. DOI worked in partnership with the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, which is prosecuting this matter.

The following individuals were arrested and charged today by criminal complaint:

TA'CHELLE CARTER, 50, of Queens Village, N.Y., and a Principal Administrative Associate employed by HRA, and PAUL COLEMAN, 62, of Brooklyn, N.Y., were each charged, while acting in concert with each other, with one count of Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, a class D felony; eight counts each of Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, both class E felonies; and one count of Petit Larceny, a class A misdemeanor.

Upon conviction, a class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison, a class E felony by up to four years in prison, and a class A misdemeanor by up to a year's incarceration.

CARTER has been employed with HRA since October 2005, is currently a Principal Administrative Associate, and in July 2021 was placed on modified duty without access to HRA's databases as a result of the DOI investigation. She is currently not supervising anyone. During the alleged conduct, CARTER's position allowed her to authorize and issue SNAP benefits, cash assistance and other forms of assistance to HRA clients and to supervise HRA employees responsible for issuing such benefits. She receives an annual salary of approximately \$61,000, and was suspended upon her arrest today.

DOI Commissioner Margaret Garnett said, "These allegations demonstrate how one government insider who chooses to break the rules can do harm – here, by diverting valuable funds from being used for eligible individuals in need. New York City expects that its employees will perform their duties with integrity and administer government programs to benefit the intended recipients, not themselves. DOI was pleased to work with the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office on this investigation."

Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez said, "SNAP benefits are meant to aid our neighbors who are struggling and in need of assistance. This defendant, a New York City employee, allegedly abused her position of trust to illegally obtain cash benefits for herself and her co-defendant. We will now seek to hold them accountable for this alleged theft."

According to the criminal complaint and the investigation, CARTER's position at HRA gave her access to HRA databases, which permitted her to authorize and issue SNAP and other benefits. COLEMAN applied for and obtained an active SNAP case in November 2014. The investigation found that a month before that date,

more

CARTER became the authorized representative for COLEMAN's HRA case. Obtaining authorized representative status allowed CARTER to apply and recertify for SNAP benefits on COLEMAN's behalf, use COLEMAN's Electronic Benefits Transfer ("EBT") card, and permitted CARTER to obtain an EBT card in her name on COLEMAN's account. CARTER caused HRA benefits to be issued to COLEMAN's EBT account in the amount of \$22,501 between June 1, 2015 and March 31, 2021. HRA records and video surveillance showed that the defendants used COLEMAN's EBT card to make purchases at various New York City stores between November 2019 and January 2021. The investigation also found that COLEMAN failed to report to HRA income from his employment as a porter at two different companies between 2015 and 2020, where he received annual income of between \$29,666 and \$35,803; and that the unreported income would have made him ineligible to receive SNAP benefits between June 1, 2015 and March 31, 2021. The investigation found that CARTER authorized COLEMAN's HRA case with COLEMAN's knowledge and without permission or authority from HRA and in violation of HRA's Code of Conduct. The investigation also found that COLEMAN signed the original HRA application and subsequent recertifications.

Commissioner Garnett thanked Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez, and his staff, for their partnership on and prosecution of the case. Commissioner Garnett also thanked HRA Commissioner Steven Banks for his and his staff's cooperation in this investigation.

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for HRA, specifically Confidential Investigator Ardijana Ivezic, under the supervision of Deputy Inspector General Audrey Feldman, Inspector General John M. Bellanie, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella, and First Deputy Commissioner Daniel Cort.

The case is being prosecuted by the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, specifically Assistant District Attorney Adam Libove, under the supervision of Laura Neubauer, Chief of the Public Integrity Bureau.

A criminal complaint is an accusation. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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.

**DOI's press releases can also be found at twitter.com/NYC_DOI
Bribery and Corruption are a Trap. Don't Get Caught Up. Report It at 212-3-NYC-DOI.**