



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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**BROOKLYN WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO DEFRAUDING THE CITY'S
COVID-19 HOTEL ROOM ISOLATION PROGRAM AND THE CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY**

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced today the guilty plea of the second defendant in a scheme to defraud the New York City COVID-19 Hotel Room Isolation Program of over \$400,000. This defendant also pled guilty to a separate scheme to defraud the New York City Housing Authority ("NYCHA"). The United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York is prosecuting this case.

CHANETTE LEWIS, 31, of Brooklyn, N.Y., also known as "NETTY HOTT," pled guilty in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, before U.S. Magistrate Judge Stewart D. Aaron, to two felony counts of Conspiracy to Commit Wire Fraud. Each count is punishable by up to five years in prison. Sentencing is scheduled for 3 p.m., May 18, 2023, before U.S. District Judge Lewis A. Kaplan.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, "This defendant exploited the City's assistance to those most affected by the COVID-19 crisis, and the programs intended to benefit vulnerable New Yorkers in need, for her personal gain. As a result of the prompt and diligent work of our law enforcement and City agency partners, today she takes responsibility for her participation in two fraudulent schemes. We will continue to work collaboratively to protect the City's resources and to ensure those resources reach their intended recipients."

According to the superseding information to which LEWIS pled, she participated in a scheme to defraud the City's Hotel Isolation Program – which provided free hotel rooms for patients convalescing from COVID-19 and for healthcare workers who needed to self-isolate due to exposure – by falsely claiming to be a healthcare worker, misappropriating actual healthcare workers' identifying information, and using Facebook to advertise fraudulently-obtained hotel rooms to individuals who did not meet the Hotel Isolation Program's requirements. Between April and July 2020, LEWIS sold approximately 1,936 nights' worth of fraudulently-obtained hotel rooms to others.

LEWIS was charged in October 2021, along with three other co-defendants. One co-defendant, TATIANA DANIEL, pled guilty to one felony count of Conspiracy to Commit Wire Fraud on November 22, 2022. Charges against the other two co-defendants remain pending. To view the release for the November 2022 plea, please click on this link: <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doi/press-releases/2022/November/22Daniel11.22.2022.pdf> To view the release for the October 2021 arrests, please click on this link: <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doi/press-releases/2021/October/COVID-19HotelFraudPR.10.05.2021.pdf>.

LEWIS also pled guilty to participation in a scheme to defraud NYCHA, between July 2020 and October 2021. NYCHA provides housing, or transfers to existing NYCHA tenants, in emergency situations, for

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example domestic violence or the need for a reasonable accommodation, to individuals who demonstrate a need. LEWIS submitted to NYCHA fabricated documents that included purported judicial Orders of Protection, letters from a District Attorney, and letters from doctors attesting to alleged medical issues that allowed her to fraudulently obtain public housing benefits for herself and others.

Commissioner Strauber thanked U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York Damian Williams and his staff for the prosecution of this matter, which was handled by Assistant United States Attorney Michael Neff of the Complex Frauds and Cybercrime Unit; and Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent-in-Charge, New York Regional Office of the U.S. Department of Labor - Office of Inspector General and his staff for their partnership on the investigation. Commissioner Strauber also thanked New York City Emergency Management Commissioner Zachary Iscol and his staff for their cooperation on the Hotel Isolation Program investigation and NYCHA Interim Chief Executive Officer Lisa Bova-Hiatt and Chief Operating Officer Eva Trimble and their staff for their cooperation on the NYCHA investigation.

At DOI, the Hotel Isolation Program investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for Emergency Management, Confidential Investigator Hope Stagnaro, under the supervision of Assistant Inspector General Aleksandro Tilka, Deputy Inspector General Arturo Sanchez, and Inspector General Audrey Feldman. The NYCHA investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for NYCHA, Confidential Investigator Delcine Doscher under the supervision of Assistant Inspector General Robin Jacknow, Deputy Inspector General Gregory DeBoer, and Inspector General Ralph Iannuzzi. Both investigations were supervised by Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella and First Deputy Commissioner Daniel G. Cort.

Indictments are accusations. 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.

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