



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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**DOI STATEMENT ON CONVICTION OF MAN WHO PREYED UPON FAMILIES
IN NEED OF HOUSING TO DEFRAUD GOVERNMENT RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), issued a statement on today’s jury trial conviction of PAUL FISHBEIN, 49, of Far Rockaway, N.Y., for defrauding rental assistance programs administered by New York City’s Human Resources Administration (“HRA”) and Department of Housing Preservation & Development (“HPD”). FISHBEIN falsely claimed to be the landlord of several properties in New York City, which he unlawfully rented to families in need. He also collected made up broker fees from the City in connection with renting out those properties. Through these two schemes, he stole hundreds of thousands of dollars – including more than \$90,000 in federal funds – from HRA and HPD.

Fishbein was found guilty after a nearly two-week jury trial in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York of mail fraud and wire fraud, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years’ imprisonment; theft of government funds, which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years’ imprisonment; and aggravated identity theft, which carries a maximum sentence of two years’ imprisonment, and which must run consecutive to any other sentence imposed. Sentencing is scheduled for July 31, before U.S. District Judge Paul A. Crotty.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, “Paul Fishbein targeted the City’s most vulnerable residents in order to raid several agencies of public funds. He placed families in need of housing into squalid apartments that he did not own, so that he could fraudulently collect rental assistance money. I thank the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York for successfully prosecuting this case, which shows that we will not tolerate such predatory schemes. I also thank the Department of Social Services for referring the matter to DOI.”

According to the criminal complaint, from 2013 through 2021, FISHBEIN defrauded the rental assistance programs of HRA and HPD by falsely claiming to be the owner and landlord of several properties in New York City based on forged deeds. The defendant unlawfully leased those properties to homeless and low/moderate-income families through these agencies’ rental programs and collected payments that included fraudulently obtained broker fees. FISHBEIN falsely claimed to HRA that he used a broker to rent out the properties, instead depositing the checks issued to the purported broker in his own bank account. FISHBEIN placed unhoused and in-need families into properties that were, for the most part, dilapidated and uninhabitable. FISHBEIN fraudulently obtained hundreds of thousands of dollars from HRA and HPD via this scheme, including more than \$90,000 in federal funds.

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The defendant also committed Medicaid fraud. Between 2014 and 2021, FISHBEIN received Medicaid benefits based on his false claims to HRA that he was financially eligible for the program. That scheme netted FISHBEIN at least approximately \$49,524.80 in Medicaid benefits to which he was not entitled.

Commissioner Strauber thanked U.S Attorney for the Southern District of New York Damian Williams and his staff for their collaboration on this investigation and prosecution, which was handled by Assistant United States Attorney Sarah L. Kushner, Christy Slavik and Jared Lenow.

This investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for the City Department of Social Services' Confidential Investigator Dimitri Rodriguez and Deputy Inspector General Jeremy Reyes and Auditor Carmen Wong and Senior Investigative Auditor Yanyan Wang, under the supervision of Director of Audits Laila Yu, Inspector General Audrey Feldman, Senior Inspector General John Bellanie, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella and First Deputy Commissioner Daniel G. Cort.

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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