



The City of New York  
Department of Investigation

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**CURRENT AND FORMER CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES CHARGED WITH  
STEALING GIFT CARDS MEANT FOR HIV & AIDS RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), announced the arrest yesterday of one current and one former employee of the City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (“DOHMH”), charged with stealing a total of 108 physical and electronic gift cards that DOHMH intended to distribute to HIV prevention program participants, from June 2017 to January 2022. DOI’s investigation was prompted by an anonymous complaint about gift card fraud and was conducted jointly with the Office of Queens County District Attorney Melinda Katz, which is handling the prosecution.

MAHBOOB BARI KHAN, 63, of New York, N.Y., a former DOHMH Deputy Director of Fiscal Administration and LISA BURGESS-THOMAS, 58, of Bronx, N.Y, a Fiscal Analyst at DOHMH, are charged with one count of Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, a class E felony, and Official Misconduct, a class A misdemeanor. Upon conviction, a class E felony is punishable by up to four years in prison and a class A misdemeanor by up to a year’s incarceration. On Tuesday, August 22, 2023, KHAN and BURGESS-THOMAS were arrested and arraigned in Queens Criminal Court and released on their own recognizance.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, “These defendants were responsible for distributing gift cards that incentivize participation in critical public health programs — but instead used dozens of cards for their own benefit, according to the criminal complaints. I thank DOHMH for their cooperation in this investigation and the Queens District Attorney’s Office for its commitment to protect essential public health programs from fraud.”

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz said, “Resources meant for the public good should never be used to line the pockets of City employees, as alleged with these Department of Health workers. Thank you to the Department of Investigation for their work on this case. My office will hold the defendants to account.”

DOHMH Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasani said, “For our public health efforts to be successful, as we’ve learned with CoVID-19 and more, they must be built on a foundation of trust. If anyone - including those working on behalf of public health - violates the public trust, they must be held accountable, as in this case. Our integrity undergirds everything we do and we cannot allow it to be compromised.”

According to the criminal complaints, KHAN oversaw the ordering and distribution of gift cards for programs run by HIV Prevention, within the Bureau of Hepatitis, HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections (“BHHS”), part of DOHMH’s Division of Disease Control. BURGESS-THOMAS directly reported to KHAN and was responsible for ordering, receiving and distributing both physical and electronic gift cards from the

vendor Omnicaard. The purpose of the gift cards is to encourage members of the public to participate in BHHS programs.

On August 18, 2020, a DOI investigator found 38 total Visa and Mastercard gift cards that were ordered for HIV Prevention on KHAN's desk. These gift cards were valued at a total of \$950 when ordered but no longer had funds on them. The investigation also found an additional 32 Amazon electronic gift cards, valued at a total of \$800, that were uploaded to an Amazon account in KHAN's name with a shipping address that matched the address in his personnel file. Based on a review of the business records of Omnicaard, the investigation found another six Visa and Mastercard gift cards valued at a total of \$450 that were used in KHAN's name. KHAN admitted to using gift cards for personal transactions, including three transactions at Time Warner Cable.

Investigators also discovered 32 purchases made with gift cards, a total of \$1,505, in the name of BURGESS-THOMAS, who admitted to using DOHMH gift cards for personal use. The investigation found that purchases were made in BURGESS-THOMAS's name from Bath and Body Works, Apple iTunes, Amazon, and Walmart.

KHAN, who began employment with DOHMH in April 1999, retired during this investigation in December 2022 with an annual salary of approximately \$110,754. BURGESS-THOMAS has worked for DOHMH since June 1989 and receives an annual salary of approximately \$94,847.

Commissioner Strauber thanked Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz, and the District Attorney's Public Integrity Bureau, which is handling this case, specifically Deputy Bureau Chief Christine Oliveri, under the supervision of Bureau Chief Khadijah Muhammad-Starling. Commissioner Strauber also thanked Dr. Ashwin Vasan, DOHMH Commissioner, and his staff for their cooperation.

At DOI, the investigation was conducted by First Deputy Inspector General Mary Kozlow under the supervision of Senior Inspector General Ann Petterson, Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Initiatives Christopher Ryan, and Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella.

Criminal complaints 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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