



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

JOCELYN E. STRAUBER
COMMISSIONER

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

Release #34-2023
nyc.gov/doi

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MONDAY, AUGUST 28, 2023**

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

**HEALTH DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE CHARGED WITH STEALING
GIFT CARDS MEANT FOR HIV & AIDS PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS**

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), announced the arrest on Friday, August 25, 2023, of a City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (“DOHMH”) Program Planner, charged with stealing 23 gift cards that were purchased to distribute to HIV prevention program participants. DOI began its investigation following an anonymous complaint about gift card fraud and investigated this case with the Office of Queens County District Attorney Melinda Katz, which is handling the prosecution.

STEPHANIE HUBBARD, 40, of New York, N.Y., is 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. HUBBARD was arrested Friday and released on her own recognizance following her arraignment in Queens Criminal Court. Her arrest is the third in the past week involving gift card fraud.

On Tuesday, August, 22, 2023, 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, were both arraigned on the same charges related to gift card thefts and released on their own recognizance. Here is the link to the prior arrests:
<https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doi/press-releases/2023/August/32Khan.BurgessThomas08.22.2023.pdf>

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, “This defendant, as charged, stole nearly two dozen Amazon gift cards that were intended for members of the public who participate in the City’s HIV-prevention programs. I thank DOHMH for cooperating in this investigation and the Queens District Attorney for its partnership in our efforts to protect public resources so that they reach the intended recipients.”

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz said, “This defendant is accused of lining her pockets at the expense of programs dedicated to preventing the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. She, and two previously charged co-defendants will be held to account. I want to thank the Department of Investigation and the City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene for their work on this case.”

DOHMH Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasani said, “The Health Department will work with our colleagues at the Department of Investigation and the Queens District Attorney’s office to ensure that resources are used as intended. If any misuse is uncovered, those responsible will be held accountable.”

more

According to a criminal complaint, HUBBARD worked in HIV Prevention, part of DOHMH's Division of Disease Control, Bureau of Hepatitis, HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections ("BHHS"). Gift cards ordered by DOHMH's HIV Administration were distributed to HIV Prevention for the purpose of encouraging members of the public to participate in BHHS programs. DOHMH employees are not permitted to take gift cards for their personal use.

On November 17, 2017, BHHS purchased 24 physical Amazon gift cards with a value of \$50 each. A review of Amazon records revealed that the value of 23 of those cards, \$1,150 in total, were uploaded to an Amazon account in HUBBARD's name, with a phone number and billing address matching the information in HUBBARD's DOHMH personnel file. The Amazon account was used for purchases between September 22, 2019, and January 4, 2020.

HUBBARD has worked for DOHMH since April 2016 and receives an annual salary of approximately \$127,682.

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

At DOI, the investigation was conducted by First Deputy Inspector General Mary Kozlow in DOI's Office of the Inspector General for DOHMH, and supervised by Senior Inspector General Ann Petterson, Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Initiatives Christopher Ryan, and Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella.

A criminal complaint is an accusation. A defendant is 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
Know something rotten in City government? Help DOI Get the Worms Out of the Big Apple.
Call: 212-3-NYC-DOI or email: Corruption@DOI.nyc.gov