

The City of New York
Department of Investigation

DANIEL G. CORT
ACTING COMMISSIONER

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Release #01-2022
nyc.gov/doi

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2022**

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DOI ARRESTS BRONX RESIDENT ON A CHARGE OF STEALING MORE THAN \$50,000 IN CITY PENSION FUNDS

Daniel G. Cort, Acting Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced the arrest today of a Bronx resident on a charge of stealing more than \$52,000 in pension checks issued by the New York City Employees' Retirement System ("NYCERS") to a deceased pensioner. The alleged crime took place from November 2015 to May 2018. DOI began investigating after examining NYCERS' records to identify potentially deceased pensioners, an investigation that is ongoing. Since the start of this investigation, NYCERS has contracted with vendors that provide death record databases so it can regularly review its records against those databases. DOI worked in partnership with the Office of Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, which obtained the indictment in this case, and is prosecuting the matter.

KIMBERLY SCARBOROUGH, 54, of the Bronx, N.Y. is charged with one count of Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, a class C felony. Upon conviction, a class C felony is punishable by up to 15 years in prison.

Acting Commissioner Daniel Cort said, "The City pension system represents City employees' hard work to provide for their retirement and its pensioners must be protected from fraudsters who pose as deceased pension members in order to steal funds from the system. It is good news that NYCERS has implemented regular checks for pensioners who are deceased and DOI continues to work with NYCERS to strengthen the agency's internal controls. DOI will also continue to work with the Manhattan District Attorney to expose and stop this type of charged conduct as well as hold accountable those individuals who seek to corrupt the pension system."

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg said, "Thefts from the pension system eat away at funds promised to hard-working City employees. Public servants deserve to know that they will be able to support themselves after retirement without fear that bad actors are draining the pension benefits they are owed. My Office, working together with the Department of Investigation, is committed to preserving the integrity of this critical system by holding those who steal benefits accountable."

According to the indictment and DOI's investigation, between November 2015 and May 2018, the defendant received deposits into her bank account totaling approximately \$52,368.65 in payments that were unauthorized to be deposited into the defendant's account and were intended for a New York City pensioner who had died in October 2015. This money was largely withdrawn in cash by the defendant from a joint bank account she owned with the deceased pensioner or was transferred to other bank accounts owned by the defendant. Material submitted to NYCERS after October 2015 was signed by the defendant, and indicated that the pensioner was still alive and that payments should continue to be made, even though the pensioner was already deceased and the payments should have ceased upon his death. Generally, City pensions cease upon a pensioner's death unless there is a designated beneficiary. The defendant and deceased pensioner were joint owners of a bank account and their exact relationship is not known.

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Acting Commissioner Cort thanked Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg for his and his staff's partnership on the investigation of this matter; and he also thanked NYCERS Executive Director Melanie Whinnery and Financial Information Services Agency Executive Director Neil Matthew, and their staffs, for their agencies' cooperation in this investigation.

Assistant District Attorneys Kelly Thomas and Andrew Joyce of the Manhattan District Attorney's Financial Frauds Bureau are prosecuting the matter.

This investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for NYCERS, specifically Special Investigator Alina Zhelizna, under the supervision of Deputy Inspectors General David Jordan and Meenal Raman, Inspector General Ann Petterson, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella, and Acting First Deputy Commissioner Philip Hung.

An indictment 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.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, May 3, 2022

Long Island Woman Indicted for Stealing \$135,000 from New York City's Retirement System

Defendant Allegedly Impersonated Cousin to Claim Death Benefit

Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez, together with New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber, today announced that a Long Island woman has been indicted for stealing \$135,178 in ordinary death benefits from the New York City Employees' Retirement System (NYCERS). As part of the theft, the defendant is alleged to have impersonated a cousin who was the rightful beneficiary of the benefit following the death of the cousin's father, a New York City transit worker.

District Attorney Gonzalez said, "This defendant allegedly attempted to defraud New York's retirement system by impersonating a relative and claiming benefits to which she was not entitled. I would like to thank Department of Investigation and my prosecutors for all the work they did to bring this defendant to justice."

Commissioner Strauber said, "As charged in the indictment, this defendant impersonated her own cousin, including through the use of fraudulent documents, to obtain a \$135,000 death benefit. In so doing, she stole from her cousin, the legal beneficiary, and from the New York City Employees' Retirement System (NYCERS). I thank NYCERS for promptly alerting DOI so that we could uncover this alleged scheme, and the dedicated prosecutors at the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office for their partnership in holding accountable those who improperly enrich themselves with City funds at the expense of legitimate beneficiaries."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Akosua Agyeman, 48 of Oceanside, New York. She was arraigned today before Brooklyn Supreme Court Justice Jill Konviser on an indictment in which she is charged with second-degree grand larceny, first-degree identity theft, first-degree offering a false instrument for filing, and first-degree falsifying business records. She was released without bail and ordered to return to court on June 29, 2022.

The District Attorney said that, according to the investigation, beginning in December 2017, the defendant allegedly made a series of fraudulent filings with NYCERS in which she purported to be the daughter of Kwaku Duah, a longtime employee of the New York City Transit Authority who died on November 18, 2017. Duah had previously designated his daughter – the defendant's cousin – as the beneficiary of the ordinary death benefit that is paid when a member of NYCERS dies before retiring. Duah's daughter, the rightful beneficiary, changed her name prior to being designated as Duah's beneficiary. This allegedly allowed the defendant to impersonate her cousin to obtain the death benefit. The filings the defendant submitted to NYCERS are alleged to include a Ghanaian passport; a birth certificate, which was invalid for not reflecting the amended name; and an IRS taxpayer identification number in the cousin's name. Furthermore, according to the investigation, on May 1, 2020, NYCERS mailed a check in the amount of

\$135,178 to the defendant's address in Oceanside. The defendant is alleged to have then deposited the check at a Bethpage Federal Credit Union bank account. Investigators from the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office and the Department of Investigation later determined the defendant opened the account using a fake Delaware driver's license. Additionally, the defendant is alleged to have visited the NYCERS customer service center in Brooklyn on December 1, 2017, where she submitted an invalid copy of her cousin's birth certificate while inquiring about the process of receiving Duah's death benefit.

The case was investigated by Department of Investigation Special Investigator Shakina Griffith-Mercado, under the supervision of Deputy Inspector General David Jordan and Inspector General Ann Petterson.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Adam Libove, Deputy Chief of the District Attorney's Public Integrity Bureau, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Laura Neubauer, Bureau Chief, Assistant District Attorney Michel Spanakos, Deputy Chief of the District Attorney's Investigations Division, and the overall supervision of Assistant District Attorney Patricia McNeill, Chief of Investigations.

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An indictment is an accusatory instrument and not proof of a defendant's guilt.



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DISTRICT ATTORNEY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2022

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FAMILY OF ALLEGED SCAM ARTISTS CHARGED WITH NUMEROUS CRIMES,
INCLUDING GRAND LARCENY, IDENTITY THEFT, TAX FRAUD

As Alleged, Trio Fraudulently Gained Ownership of Deceased Laurelton Resident's \$700K Home, Defrauded Section 8 Funding, Stole Covid Relief Funds & Filed Fake Unemployment Insurance Claims; One of the Defendants Used Her Position at HRA To Steal Identities of More Than 20 Children

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz today announced that Stephanie Bailey, 50, her daughter Chianti Bailey, 31, and her sister Latonya Bailey Dostaly, 45, have been charged with multiple crimes including grand larceny, forgery, perjury, identify theft, defrauding the government and official misconduct.

District Attorney Katz said, "As alleged, these defendants used virtually every trick in the book to pull off an assortment of illegal scams over more than a decade - including taking control of the \$700,000-plus home of a longtime Laurelton resident who died in 2010. They stole people's identities - including the identities of at least 20 children - to use in a large-scale tax fraud scheme, ripped off Section 8 and Covid relief funds, and filed \$200,000 worth of false unemployment insurance claims. These defendants will now be held to account for their one-family crime spree."

Defendant Stephanie Bailey of 225th Street, Laurelton, and Latonya Bailey Dostaly of West 28th Street, Brooklyn, have been arraigned before Queens Criminal Court Judges Denise Johnson and Anthony Battisti, on felony complaints charging them with multiple counts of grand larceny, offering false instruments for filing, forgery, making sworn false statements, perjury, identity theft, criminal impersonation, defrauding the government and official misconduct. The defendants were ordered to return to Court on June 8, 2022. If convicted, each faces up to 52 years in prison.

Defendant Chianti Bailey, also of 225th Street, Laurelton remains at large, and warrants have been issued for her arrest.

According to the complaint, retired Port Authority accountant Russell Butler died in 2010, leaving personal documents inside his empty home at 137-47 225th Street, Laurelton. As alleged, defendant Stephanie Bailey moved her family into Mr. Butler's home by 2014 and shortly thereafter, her daughter Chianti Bailey filed a fake will in Bronx Surrogates Court claiming she was the heir to Mr. Butler's estate. She was granted ownership of his house in 2020 and promptly took out a \$200,000 mortgage. She also used the fake documents to obtain more than \$100,000 in unclaimed funds owed to the Butler estate.

While her daughter was allegedly stealing Mr. Butler's house, defendant Stephanie Bailey allegedly stole almost \$100k from the Housing Choice Voucher program commonly known as Section 8. According to the complaint, defendant Stephanie Bailey applied for housing assistance with New York State Homes and Community Renewal in September 2014 and included in her application a fake lease - listing a fictitious landlord - for the Laurelton house. The Federal Government sent rent payments of almost \$90k to the fake landlord, which defendants Chianti Bailey and Latonya Bailey Dostaly deposited into their own bank accounts.

Further, DA Katz said the defendants allegedly filed fake tax returns seeking refunds from the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance. More than 30 victims had their identities stolen in the defendants' scheme, and more remain under investigation. In 12 fake tax returns, the defendants attempted to steal more than \$52,000 from the NYS Tax Department and succeeded in stealing almost \$38,000.

Acting New York State Commissioner of Taxation and Finance Amanda Hiller said, "The crimes alleged in this case are brazen and deeply troubling. When people steal identities—including the identities of children—to commit tax fraud, all New Yorkers pay the price. We'll continue to work with our partners at all levels of law enforcement, including Queens County District Attorney Melinda Katz, to ensure those who commit tax fraud and other related crimes are held accountable."

According to the complaint, defendant Latonya Bailey Dostaly used her position as a Job Opportunity Specialist at the NYC Human Resources Administration to access HRA's electronic files. Dostaly allegedly accessed applicant files and stole the identities of more than 20 children for use as dependents in her family's fake tax return scheme. Defendants received tax refunds from the NYS Tax Department which they deposited in their bank accounts. And when Covid relief funds were sent to the addresses used by taxpayers in their tax returns, defendants allegedly deposited those funds into their bank accounts as well.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, "The HRA employee who is charged here allegedly preyed on the very clients she was supposed to assist, using her access to City files to steal the identities of more than 20 children, which her two relatives – also her co-conspirators – used to file fake tax returns to defraud New York State of tens of thousands of dollars in tax refunds. Those who seek help from City-administered programs should not thereby become victims of wrongdoing by City employees and others, and we will work with our law enforcement partners to hold such wrongdoers accountable. DOI thanks the Queens District Attorney, the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance and the New York State Department of Labor for their collaboration on this investigation."

The defendants are also accused of attempting to steal more than \$200,000 in fake unemployment claims filed with the NYS Department of Labor. As alleged, they filed fraudulent unemployment insurance claims in the names of nine different people, received \$123,487 and attempted to steal an additional \$97,962.

"The Unemployment Insurance Program exists to provide needed assistance to qualified individuals who are unemployed due to no fault of their own. Fraud against the Unemployment Insurance Program distracts state workforce agencies from ensuring benefits go to individuals who are eligible to receive them. The Office of Inspector General will continue to work closely with the Queens District Attorney's Office, the New York State Department of Tax and Finance, and our many law enforcement partners, to investigate those who exploit the Unemployment Insurance Program," stated Special Agent-In-Charge Jonathan Mellone, New York Region, US Department of Labor Office of Inspector General.

DA Katz said that the investigation was conducted by her Crimes Against Revenue Unit and the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance's Office of Internal Affairs. Instrumental to the investigation was the assistance of the New York City Department of Investigation, New York State Homes and Community Renewal, the New York City Department of Social Services, and the United States Department of Labor.

The investigation was conducted by Assistant District Attorney Marnie Lobel, Chief of the Crimes Against Revenue Unit, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Hana Kim, Deputy Chief of the Frauds Bureau and Assistant District Attorney Joseph T. Conley, III, Chief of the Frauds Bureau and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard Brave. Criminal Investigator Jemayel Mall of the Office of Internal Affairs at the NYS Department of Taxation and Finance was the lead investigator, under the supervision of the Director of Internal Affairs Brian M. Hickey and overall supervision of Acting Commissioner Amanda Hiller.

Detective Robert Gonzalez of the Queens DA's Detective Bureau assisted in the investigation under the supervision of Sgt. Edwin Driscoll, Lt. Steven Brown and Deputy Chief Daniel O'Brien. Investigative Accountant Barak Haimoff, under the supervision of Director of the Financial Analyst Unit Joseph Plonski, conducted forensic audits in the case.

Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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Note to Editors: Archived press releases are available at www.queensda.org.





UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE *Southern District of New York*

U.S. ATTORNEY DAMIAN WILLIAMS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, July 6, 2022
<http://www.justice.gov/usao/nys>

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TWO MEN CHARGED IN \$5.4 MILLION SCHEME TO DEFRAUD NEW YORK CITY PROGRAM FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

Damian Williams, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced today the unsealing of a Complaint charging RUDEAN WEIR and JEROME WEAH, with conspiracy to commit wire fraud, wire fraud, and aggravated identity theft, in connection with a scheme to defraud a program of the New York City Human Resources Administration ("HRA") which provides cash assistance to homeless veterans of the United States armed services ("Veterans") seeking permanent housing. WEAH was presented yesterday in Manhattan federal court before United States Magistrate Judge Valerie Figueredo. WEIR will be presented today in federal court in Atlanta, Georgia.

U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said: "As alleged, the defendants abused a New York City program intended to benefit veterans of the United States armed services seeking permanent housing by submitting hundreds of false applications for benefits and causing more than \$5 million in fraudulent payments. Thanks to the efforts of the New York City Department of Investigation, the fraud has been exposed and the defendants will have to answer for their conduct."

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said: "The Enhanced One-Shot Deal program provides critical funding to help New York City's unhoused veterans obtain permanent housing. As alleged, defendants Jerome Weah and Rudean Weir stole millions of dollars from the program by fraudulently claiming entitlement to rent, brokers' fees and other program payments. I thank the City's Department of Social Services for referring this investigation to DOI and for their hard work on this matter. DOI is proud to work with DSS, and our federal partners at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York and the Office of Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, to expose and prevent the theft of precious public funding intended to aid vulnerable New Yorkers."

As alleged in the Complaint unsealed today in Manhattan federal court¹:

¹ As the introductory phrase signifies, the entirety of the text of the Complaint and the description of the Complaint set forth in this release constitute only allegations, and every fact described should be treated as an allegation.

From at least October 2020 through at least May 2022, RUDEAN WEIR and JEROME WEAH submitted more than 340 fraudulent applications seeking cash assistance pursuant to the Enhanced One Shot Deal (“EOSD”) program administered by the HRA. The EOSD is an emergency assistance program pursuant to which HRA makes a one-time cash assistance payment to qualifying individuals. EOSD payments are often used to help individuals move out of homeless shelters and/or other temporary housing into permanent housing. EOSD payments may be used to cover certain costs associated with the move to permanent housing, including rent, moving expenses, security deposits, broker’s fees, and payments for furniture and other household items. The HRA also offers and administers services and programs for Veterans, sometimes referred to as “Veteran’s Initiatives.” In connection with these services, the HRA has a designated group responsible for receiving and reviewing EOSD requests made on behalf of homeless Veterans seeking permanent housing.

Between October 2020 and May 2022, the HRA received at least 340 EOSD applications which claimed that the applicants were homeless Veterans who had entered into a lease agreement with a particular landlord (“Landlord-1”). Each of these applications (the “Landlord-1 EOSD Applications”) claimed that a particular company provided broker’s services in connection with the lease agreement (“Broker Company-1”). HRA paid over \$5.4 million in EOSD payments and broker’s fees pursuant to the Landlord-1 EOSD Applications.

Based on a review of approximately 60 of the 340 Landlord-1 EOSD Applications, those applications included, among other things, a completed application for “Emergency Assistance” on an HRA designated form; a copy of a purported lease agreement between a Veteran and Landlord-1; forms requesting payment to Landlord-1 and Broker Company-1 for services provided; personal identifying information, such as copies of identification cards and military and/or employment records for the Veteran; and an identification card issued by the New York Department of State reflecting one of two individuals and purporting that each of those individuals was a “Real Estate Salesperson” with Broker Company-1.

The Landlord-1 EOSD Applications were fraudulent. Specifically, Landlord-1 and the Veterans did not, in fact, enter into the lease agreements submitted to HRA in connection with the Landlord-1 EOSD Applications, and Broker Company-1 did not provide real estate brokerage services to either Landlord-1 and/or the Veterans. Furthermore, the identification cards reflecting purported individual brokers associated with Broker Company-1 were forged, in that those brokers are not affiliated with Broker Company-1 and did not provide any real estate brokerage services to either Landlord-1 and/or the Veterans. Therefore, the Landlord-1 EOSD Applications contained fake documentation and information, and fraudulently induced HRA into making EOSD payments.

HRA made EOSD payments of at least \$5.4 million in connection with the Landlord-1 EOSD Applications. Of this \$5.4 million, over \$3.6 million was deposited into a bank account controlled by WEIR, and over \$1 million was deposited into a bank account controlled by

WEAH. In addition, during this period, the bank account controlled by WEIR paid over \$1 million to a bank account held in the name of WEAH.

* * *

WEIR, 37, of Atlanta, Georgia, and WEAH, 46, of Edison, New Jersey, are charged with conspiracy to commit wire fraud and wire fraud, each of which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison, and one count of aggravated identity theft, which carries an additional mandatory consecutive two-year sentence.

The maximum potential sentences in this case are prescribed by Congress and are provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendant will be determined by the judge.

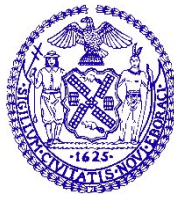
The charges contained in the Complaint are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Mr. Williams praised the outstanding investigative work of the DOI. Mr. Williams also thanked the DSS and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Inspector General, for their assistance.

This case is being handled by the Office's General Crimes Unit. Assistant United States Attorney Matthew Weinberg is in charge of the prosecution.

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The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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Release #16-2022
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, JULY 26, 2022**

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**CURRENT CITY EMPLOYEE AND FORMER CITY EMPLOYEE CHARGED WITH
DEFRAUDING NEW YORK STATE MEDICAID PROGRAM**

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced the arrests today of Human Resources Administration ("HRA") employee, NATALI TALOVIKOVA, 55, and former HRA employee, ROLAND TUBMAN, 47, on federal charges of agreeing to defraud, and defrauding, Medicaid by renewing benefits for ineligible individuals in exchange for payments. DOI worked on the investigation in partnership with the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI") and the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York.

TALOVIKOVA and TUBMAN, both of Brooklyn, are each charged with the federal felony offense of conspiring to use the facilities of interstate commerce in furtherance of unlawful activity and to receive bribes. Upon conviction, the offense is punishable by up to five years' imprisonment.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, "These HRA employee defendants, as alleged, were responsible for ensuring that Medicaid benefits were issued only to those individuals who were eligible to receive them. But instead of doing their jobs, as charged, they used their positions, access and knowledge to renew benefits for ineligible individuals and to obtain kickbacks. DOI thanks the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York and the FBI for their collaboration on this investigation."

According to the Indictment and DOI's investigation, between January 2009 and December 2017, TALOVIKOVA and TUBMAN defrauded Medicaid by conspiring to illegally renew Medicaid benefits for various ineligible individuals in exchange for payments from these individuals. Specifically, TUBMAN, who worked at HRA until March 2009, received payments from individuals in exchange for ensuring that their Medicaid benefits would be renewed. TALOVIKOVA, who was an HRA Eligibility Specialist at the time of the scheme, was responsible for reviewing Medicaid renewal forms and conducting Medicaid eligibility determinations. TALOVIKOVA renewed the individuals' Medicaid benefits and shortly thereafter TUBMAN paid TALOVIKOVA for doing so.

TALOVIKOVA has been an employee of HRA since October 2006, and receives an annual salary of approximately, \$43,600. She was suspended upon her arrest today. TUBMAN worked for HRA as an Eligibility Specialist from September 2000 to March 2009, and at the time of his separation from HRA received an annual salary of approximately \$36,745.

Commissioner Strauber thanked U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York Breon Peace and his staff for their prosecution of this matter, specifically Assistant United States Attorney Adam Toporovsky, from the General Crimes bureau. Commissioner Strauber also thanked Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's New York Office, Michael J. Driscoll, and his staff for their partnership on this investigation as well as City Department of Social Services ("DSS") Commissioner Gary P. Jenkins and his staff for their cooperation in this investigation. DSS is comprised of the administrative units of HRA and the Department of Homeless Services ("DHS").

At DOI, the matter was investigated by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for HRA, specifically Confidential Investigator Ardijana Ivezić with the assistance of Director of Audit Laila Yu and Senior Investigative Auditor Yanyan Wang, and under the supervision of Assistant Inspector General Jeremy Reyes, Deputy Inspector

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General Audrey Feldman, Inspector General John M. Bellanie, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella, and First Deputy Commissioner Daniel G. Cort.

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U.S. Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 12, 2022

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United States Attorney's Office

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PRESS RELEASE

**Eight Defendants, Including a Brooklyn Medical Doctor, and
Three Pharmacists, Charged with Illegally Distributing
More Than 1.2 Million Oxycodone Pills**

**Defendants Allegedly Conspired to Divert Oxycodone Worth at Least \$24
Million**

Earlier today, in federal court in Brooklyn, a 10-count indictment was unsealed charging Dr. Somsri Ratanaprasatporn, her office manager Leticia Smith, Bassam Amin, Omar Elsayed, and Yousef Ennab who are pharmacists, Michael Kent, Anthony Mathis, and Raymond Walker with conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute oxycodone and related crimes. Smith and Kent are also charged with money laundering in connection with their alleged efforts to hide the proceeds of their illegal oxycodone distribution operation. All eight defendants were arrested this morning and are scheduled to be arraigned this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge Robert M. Levy.

Breon Peace, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; Frank A. Tarentino, Special Agent-in-Charge, Drug Enforcement Administration, New York Division (DEA); Elysia M. Doherty, Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General's Office of Investigations, New York Region (HHS-OIG); Thomas M. Fattorusso, Special Agent-in-Charge, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigations, New York (IRS-CI); Keechant L. Sewell, Commissioner, New York City Police Department (NYPD); Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner, New York City Department of Investigation (DOI); and Joshua Vinciguerra, Director, New York State Department of Health, Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement (BNE), announced the charges.

"Doctors and medical professionals have a professional obligation to do no harm, but, as alleged, the defendants callously supplied more than one million pills to traffickers for distribution, resulting in dangerous opioids flooding the streets of this district," stated United States Attorney Peace. "Today's charges demonstrate this Office's continued commitment to stemming the availability of illegal drugs and holding to account those who contribute to the epic tragedy that is the opioid epidemic."

"This structured drug trafficking ring's operations started in a doctor's office and ended with \$24 million worth of diverted oxycodone on the streets. DEA and our law enforcement partners will continue to hold DEA Registrants and other medical professionals to the highest possible standards and also hold them accountable when they knowingly endanger members of the community."

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Together, we are all proud of this righteous work, and for the difference it makes in our communities. I commend the investigators and the prosecution team for their work on this widespread investigation,” stated DEA Special Agent-in-Charge Tarentino.

“As alleged, our health care system that serves vulnerable populations has been undermined by these individuals,” stated HHS-OIG Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge Doherty. “HHS-OIG, together with our law enforcement partners, will continue to vigorously pursue those who steal from government health care programs for personal gain.”

NYPD Commissioner Sewell stated: “Today’s charges prove again that our fight against the illegal drug trade is unrelenting. The NYPD, together with all of our local, state, and federal law-enforcement partners, will pursue these criminals wherever they operate – and when the perpetrators are trusted members of the medical community, their crimes are especially egregious. I thank and commend the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York, the DEA’s New York Division, the Office of the Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Internal Revenue Services’ Criminal Investigations, the NYS Department of Health’s Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement, the New York City Department of Investigation, and everyone else involved in this case for their exceptional work.”

“As charged, these defendant medical professionals and their co-conspirators supplied more than 1.2 million oxycodone pills to the streets of New York City, promoting the illicit trade of dangerously addictive opioids. DOI will continue to work tirelessly with our federal and law enforcement partners to ensure that pill mills such as this one are exposed and shut down, and that the individuals who run them are held accountable. I thank the United States Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York and all our investigative partners on this investigation,” stated DOI Commissioner Strauber.

“With this multi-million-dollar criminal scheme, it’s alleged the defendants made their profits off the vulnerabilities and addictions of their customers throughout New York City. Law enforcement partnerships like those seen here today have been and continue to be an integral part of stopping the flow of highly addictive narcotics into our communities,” stated IRS-CI Special Agent-in-Charge Fattorusso.

“Today’s charges show how diverted prescription drugs still fuel the opioid epidemic in New York. The Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement remains resolute in its commitment to work together with our federal and local law enforcement partners to disrupt and dismantle the criminal organizations that abuse the public’s trust in health care practitioners to move these dangerous and addictive pills from pharmacies to our neighborhoods,” stated BNE Director Vinciguerra.

Oxycodone is a highly addictive opioid used to treat severe and chronic pain conditions. Every year, millions of Americans abuse oxycodone, and the misuse of prescription painkillers like oxycodone leads to hundreds of thousands of annual emergency room visits. More than 16,000 Americans died from prescription opioid overdoses in 2020. Oxycodone prescriptions have enormous cash value to drug dealers. For example, one oxycodone 30 mg tablet, which was the dosage prescribed in this case, can be sold by dealers on the street for between \$20 and \$30 in New York City.

As set forth in the indictment and publicly filed documents, between December 2018 and October 2022, the defendants operated a drug distribution ring out of a medical practice on Linden Boulevard in East New York, Brooklyn. Together, they unlawfully distributed more than 11,000 prescriptions for oxycodone, amounting to more than 1.2 million oxycodone pills, which carry a

street value of at least \$24 million. Ratanaprasatporn, a pediatrician and general practitioner, and Smith, issued the prescriptions; Amin, Ennab and Elsayed filled the prescriptions at pharmacies in Brooklyn and Staten Island, and Kent, Mathis, and Walker oversaw “crews” of sham patients who received medically unnecessary prescriptions. Together, the defendants made millions of dollars from the scheme. During the execution of a search warrant this morning, members of law enforcement recovered several hundred thousand dollars in U.S. currency from Smith’s residence. Law enforcement also recovered two handguns that Kent was observed tossing from a rear door of his residence.

If convicted of the drug charges, the defendants face up to 20 years’ imprisonment. If convicted of the money laundering charges, Smith and Kent face up to 20 years’ imprisonment for each count.

The charges in the indictment are allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The charges are the result of an ongoing Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) investigation led by the United States Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York and the DEA. The principal mission of the OCDETF program is to identify, disrupt, and dismantle the most serious drug trafficking, weapons trafficking, and money laundering organizations, and those primarily responsible for the nation’s illegal drug supply. OCDETF uses a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach that leverages the strengths of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies against criminal networks.

The government’s case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Laura Zuckerwise, Victor Zapana, and Gilbert Rein. Assistant United States Attorney Claire Kedeshian of the Office’s Asset Recovery Section is handling forfeiture matters.

New Yorkers who need help finding substance-use-disorder treatment resources should contact 1-877-8-HOPENY. The HopeLine provides high quality, responsive information, and referral services via phone and text message to callers throughout New York State experiencing substance abuse issues. HOPEline services are free and confidential.

The Defendants:

LETICIA SMITH
Age: 54
Brooklyn, New York

BASSAM AMIN
Age: 69
Brooklyn, New York

OMAR ELSAYED
Age: 28
Hackensack, New Jersey

YOUSEF ENNAB
Age: 25
Brooklyn, New York

MICHAEL KENT
Age: 49
Brooklyn, New York

ANTHONY MATHIS
Age: 55
New Windsor, New York

Dr. SOMSRI RATANAPRASATPORN
Age: 75
Staten Island, New York

RAYMOND WALKER
Age: 70
Brooklyn, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 22-CR464 (DLI)

DAYVON BOSTICK-SAMUELS (also known as “Daytoe”)
Age: 22
Brooklyn, New York

JOHNNY CHILES
Age: 36
Brooklyn, New York

BERMON CLARKE (also known as “G” and “Blue”)
Age: 28
Rahway, New Jersey

MIKE GUSTAVO CONNOR (also known as “Gus”)
Age: 21
Brooklyn, New York

RASHAAD CRAIG (also known as “Skeeno”)
Age: 25
Brooklyn, New York

RONALD DAVIS (also known as “Ronno”)
Age: 29
Brooklyn, New York

QUINTEN DELVALLE (also known as “Q”)
Age: 24
Brooklyn, New York

ELIZABETH DUECASTER
Age: 35
Searsport, Maine

BRITTANY DUNCAN

Age: 26

Bayonne, New Jersey

NEHEMIE ERIL (also known as “Poca”)

Age: 24

Orange, New Jersey

CHRISTINA ESTEVEZ

Age: 31

Queens, New York

LARON ESTRADA (also known as “Yetta”)

Age: 27

Brooklyn, New York

ERICA FAGGIOLE

Age: 44

Maine

ANTONIO FULTON (also known as “Tone”)

Age: 23

Brooklyn, New York

FRANKLIN GILLESPIE (also known as “Spazz” and “Frankie Gino”)

Age: 30

Newark, New Jersey

ROMEO GONZALES

Age: 22

Brooklyn, New York

NIA GOVAN (also known as “Cam” and “V”)

Age: 29

Boston, Massachusetts

KEON GRANT (also known as “Keys”)

Age: 34

Brooklyn, New York

MOELEEK HARRELL (also known as “Moe Money”)

Age: 31

Brooklyn, New York

PAUL HARRIS (also known as “Baldhead”)

Age: 31

Brooklyn, New York

NADINE HEATH

Age: 54

Troy, Maine

ROBERT HOLT (also known as “Ricky” and “Ghost”)

Age: 33

Brooklyn, New York

AMANDA HUARD

Age: 38

Raymond, Maine

LATRELL JOHNSON (also known as “Barlie Buckz”)

Age: 27

Brooklyn, New York

ANTHONY KENNEDY (also known as “Biggie”)

Age: 34

Queens, New York

TYQUAWN LANE (also known as “Bicks” and “Tah Tah”)

Age: 27

Brooklyn, New York

JOANNE LYDEM

Age: 49

Garland, Maine

DARIUS MURPHY

Age: 24

Brooklyn, New York

JESSICA PELKEY

Age: 26

Presque Isle, Maine

CHRISHAWN PENN (also known as “Prince”)

Age: 26

Brooklyn, New York

MICHAEL PEREZ (also known as “White Mike”)

Age: 29

Brooklyn, New York

JOELLE POCHE (also known as “Rico”)

Age: 21

Brooklyn, New York

TERRELL RATLIFF (also known as “Rello”)

Age: 29

Brooklyn, New York

MICHAEL REID (also known as “Half”)

Age: 39

Brooklyn, New York

ISAIAH TERRY SANDIFORD

Age: 21

Brooklyn, New York

JAMEL SMITH

Age: 23

Bronx, New York

CHINASA STRACHAN

Age: 33

Brooklyn, New York

NICOLETTE TOMPKINS

Age: 22

Westfield, Maine

AMANDA WALTON (also known as “A”)

Age: 32

Portland, Maine

DANIELLE WHITE

Age: 47

Swanville, Maine

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 20-CR-239 (S-8) (BMC)



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

JOCELYN E. STRAUBER
COMMISSIONER

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Release #15-2022
nyc.gov/doi

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, JUNE 24, 2022**

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

**DOI INVESTIGATION LEADS TO ARREST OF FORMER CITY CONTRACTOR ON CHARGES OF
STEALING FROM HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION CLIENTS SEEKING HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE**

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced the arrest of a former worker of a City Human Resources Administration ("HRA") contractor for allegedly defrauding two HRA clients who were seeking assistance from HRA's Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) of \$2,650. DOI's investigation was prompted by HRA's report of potential misconduct involving the HEAP program. DOI worked in partnership with the Office of Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez, which is prosecuting this matter.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, "The City's Human Resources Administration provides critical services to New Yorkers, often at times of crisis. But instead of rendering assistance, this defendant, as charged, shamelessly deceived and stole from at-risk New Yorkers while pretending to assist. I thank the Brooklyn District Attorney for his commitment to hold accountable those who seek to exploit vulnerable New Yorkers and I thank the Department of Social Services Commissioner, who also oversees HRA, for his cooperation in this investigation."

Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez said, "This defendant's alleged scheme targeted and victimized vulnerable and needy New Yorkers seeking assistance. We will now seek to hold her accountable. I thank the DOI Commissioner and her staff for their work on this matter."

Department of Social Services Commissioner Gary P. Jenkins said, "The Human Resources Administration is committed to serving our clients with integrity and honesty. We hold our staff to the highest ethical standards and do not tolerate any violation of the public trust that is fundamental to the vital work of serving and supporting New Yorkers in need. On behalf of my agency, I would like to thank the Brooklyn DA and the Department of Investigation for their thorough and comprehensive probe into this matter and taking action against this bad actor."

KENDRA CHRISTIE, 25, of Brooklyn, N.Y., a former contract employee with an HRA contractor on the HEAP program, was arrested and charged late yesterday, Thursday, June 23, 2022, with Scheme to Defraud in the First Degree and Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, both class E felonies; and one count of Attempted Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, two counts of Official Misconduct, and 12 counts of Petit Larceny, all class A misdemeanors. 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. CHRISTIE was arraigned on Friday, June 24, 2022 in Brooklyn Criminal Court and released with some supervision requirements.

CHRISTIE worked for IOS Staffing Services, an HRA contractor tasked with providing temporary personnel services. CHRISTIE was employed for the seasonal period of September 4, 2018 through April 26, 2019 and was paid a total of approximately \$15,599.

According to the criminal complaint and the investigation, CHRISTIE worked as a seasonal HEAP employee in Brooklyn, N.Y. from September 4, 2018 until April 26, 2019. CHRISTIE'S duties and responsibilities included, among other things, interviewing clients to assist in determining whether they were eligible for HEAP

more

benefits, assisting in completing HEAP applications, and entering HEAP applicants' information into the HEAP system database. In connection with this role, CHRISTIE had access to HEAP recipient bank account information and other confidential client information.

On February 13, 2019, CHRISTIE was assigned to assist an HRA Client who was applying for HEAP benefits to subsidize payment of his National Grid and Con Edison utility bills. CHRISTIE informed the HRA Client that he was not eligible for HEAP assistance and told the HRA Client that if he did not promptly pay her \$200 to \$300, his gas meter would be removed. CHRISTIE then offered to facilitate an installment payment plan on his behalf under the false premise that CHRISTIE would use those funds to pay off the HRA Client's utility bills. CHRISTIE did not have permission or authority to make such a representation and did not have permission or authority to accept any payments from the HRA Client for this purpose. Believing that CHRISTIE had such authority, on February 13, 2019, the HRA Client provided CHRISTIE with \$150 in cash. The HRA Client made six additional payments to CHRISTIE based on her representations that she was using the money to facilitate payment of his utility bills. In total, between February 13, 2019 and May 1, 2019, the HRA Client paid CHRISTIE \$900 and on an unknown date paid CHRISTIE \$200, for a total of \$1,100.

Instead of paying the HRA Client's utility bills with the money the HRA Client provided CHRISTIE, the defendant accessed the bank account of another Brooklyn-based HEAP Recipient. Between February 13, 2019 and April 26, 2019, taking funds from the HEAP Recipient's bank account, and paying a total of \$1,300 on the HRA Client's National Grid and Con Edison accounts. On February 25, 2019, CHRISTIE transferred \$250 from the same HEAP Recipient's bank account to pay her boyfriend's Con Edison bill. CHRISTIE did not have authorization or permission to take these funds from the Brooklyn-based HEAP Recipient.

Commissioner Strauber thanked Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez, and his staff, for their partnership on and prosecution of the case. Commissioner Strauber also thanked Department of Social Services ("DSS") Commissioner Gary P. Jenkins for his and his staff's cooperation in this investigation. DSS oversees HRA.

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

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 G. Cort.

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.

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