



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

JOCELYN E. STRAUBER
COMMISSIONER

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

Release #11-2023
nyc.gov/doi

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 2023

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

QUEENS COUPLE CHARGED IN \$112,707 PUBLIC BENEFITS SCAM

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), announced today the arrest of a Queens couple on federal charges of conspiracy to commit mail fraud relating to the theft of \$112,707 in state and federal benefits involving three separate public benefit programs. DOI investigated this matter in collaboration with the United States Postal Inspection Service’s New York Office and the United States Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York, which is prosecuting the case.

SEAD SELIMOVIC, 52, and his wife, MIRELA SELIMOVIC, 46, both of Bellerose, Queens, are each charged with conspiracy to commit mail fraud and face a maximum sentence of 20 years’ imprisonment if convicted. The SELIMOVICS were presented today before United States Magistrate Judge Vera M. Scanlon in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York and they were each released on a \$50,000 bond.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, “As charged, these defendants schemed to illegally obtain public benefits, painting a false picture of their finances to claim that they were eligible and in need when, in fact, they owned numerous properties and had substantial income. I thank our federal partners, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York, for their dedication in exposing the misuse of public benefits and preserving critical public funds.”

Inspector in Charge of the New York Division Daniel B. Brubaker said, “This case highlights the Selimovics’ greed, who gamed the system and stole not just from the government, but from those who are truly in need. Their alleged actions took benefits directly from programs designed to assist those who are trying to make ends meet in an already tough economy. Postal Inspectors and their law enforcement partners will never tolerate this behavior and will work tirelessly to bring criminals to justice who harm the American public.”

According to the complaint, between approximately February 2017 and January 2023, SEAD and MIRELA SELIMOVIC conspired with others, to knowingly submit applications through the United States mail for three separate public benefits programs, repeatedly providing false information in support of their applications including, understating their family income, falsely stating they each had only one residence, and falsely stating that their primary residence was a rental, among other false information.

The Disabled Homeowners’ Exemption (“DHE”) program is a New York State program that allows local governments, including New York City, to reduce the property taxes paid by qualifying persons with disabilities — that is, those who have documented evidence of their disability and meet certain income limitations and other requirements relating to their legal residence and income.

The federal government administers the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“SNAP”), which subsidizes low-income households and enables them to achieve a more nutritious diet by increasing their food-purchasing power. The New York State Medicaid program is a federal and state health care program providing benefits to individuals and families who meet specified financial and other eligibility requirements. For both the

more

SNAP and Medicaid programs, beneficiaries are required to submit annual documentation supporting their eligibility.

According to the complaint, this investigation found that the defendants filed DHE applications and repeatedly understated their family income level, falsely stating, among other things, that they each had only one residence. In fact, the defendants owned numerous rental properties in New York and Pennsylvania from which they received just over \$575,000 between 2017 and 2022. In addition, SEAD SELIMOVIC repeatedly falsely stated in SNAP benefits' applications that his primary residence was a rental, when in fact he and MIRELA SELIMOVIC owned their residence, underreported his income, and failed to report his wife as a member of his household. SEAD SELIMOVIC also applied for Medicaid benefits and in that context made repeated false statements, including with respect to his income and the income of other members of his household.

In connection with this fraudulent scheme, between about February 2017 and January 2023, the defendants received approximately \$40,707 in DHE benefits, approximately \$51,091 in SNAP benefits, and approximately \$20,909 in Medicaid benefits to which they were not entitled.

DOI Commissioner Strauber thanked Breon Peace, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York and his staff for the prosecution of this matter, which is being handled by Assistant United States Attorney Chand Edwards-Balfour. Commissioner Strauber also thanked Daniel Brubaker, U.S. Postal Inspection Service Inspector in Charge of the New York Office, and his staff, especially Postal Inspector Joseph Marcus, for their partnership on this investigation.

Confidential Investigator Jeffrey Li of DOI's Office of the Inspector General for DOF investigated this matter, along with Investigative Auditors Carmen Wong and Yanyan Wang, under the supervision of Assistant Inspector General Anastasia Plakas, Director of Audits Laila Yu, Senior Inspector General Ann Petterson, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella, and First Deputy Commissioner Daniel G. Cort.

A complaint is an accusation. 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.

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