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**FORMER CORRECTION OFFICER CHARGED WITH FILING PHONY DOCUMENTATION FOR
MEDICAL TREATMENT**

*Defendant Allegedly Claimed She Received Pain Management Treatment 29 Times at Bronx Practice;
Faces up to Seven Years in Prison, if Convicted*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz and New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber announced that Equanna Escalera was arraigned on charges of grand larceny and offering a false instrument for filing for submitting documentation falsely claiming that she had been treated by a doctor and physical therapists 29 times in 2022 to justify being out on sick leave from her position as a Correction Officer at Rikers Island.

District Attorney Katz said: “As alleged, the defendant violated the trust of her employers at the Department of Correction by filing phony documentation to remain out of work on sick leave while still collecting a paycheck. She also let down her colleagues at Rikers Island who were struggling with understaffing. I thank our partners at the New York City Department of Investigation for their work on this case.”

Commissioner Strauber said: “As charged, this former correction officer faked medical documentation supporting her false claim that she was entitled to 29 days of paid sick leave, defrauding the City thousands of dollars in stolen wages. Her conduct falls far short of the City’s high standards for correction officers whose work is critical to maintaining safety and order in the City’s jails. I thank the Queens District Attorney’s Office for its commitment to protect City resources and to hold accountable individuals who commit fraud.”

Escalera, 43, of Wisteria Circle in Bellport, LI, was arraigned today on charges of grand larceny in the third degree, grand larceny in the fourth degree and 29 counts of offering a false instrument for filing in the second degree. Queens Criminal Court Judge Sharifa Nasser-Cuellar ordered her to return to court December 15. If convicted, Escalera faces a potential maximum of 2 1/3 to seven years in prison.

District Attorney Katz said that, according to the charges and investigation, Escalera was employed as a correction officer assigned to Rikers Island and was out on sick leave from March 24, 2022, to December 5, 2022.

Under city regulations, uniformed correction officers who report sick for nine days or more during a calendar year may not leave their homes except under certain circumstances such as a visit to a physician or hospital. Those who do leave their residences are required to submit documentation about the trip to the Department of Correction’s Health Management Division (HMD).

Escalera submitted 31 letters covering 29 dates to HMD purporting that she received treatment by a physician or physical therapist at Multi-Specialty Pain Management in the Bronx between March 2022 and December 2022. The documents were written on the pain management center's letterhead.

An investigation revealed that Escalera was not treated at the practice on the 29 dates she claimed and the practice had not given the defendant permission to generate letters saying she had been seen.

On the 29 dates in question, Escalera received \$11,200.78 in total pay.

Escalera surrendered to the Queens District Attorney's office today.

The investigation was conducted by Correction Officer Investigators Matty Lupinacci and Anthony Palmer with DOI's Office of the Inspector General for DOC.

Assistant District Attorney Yong Kim of the District Attorney's Public Corruption Bureau is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard A. Brave.

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

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