



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

JOCELYN E. STRAUBER
COMMISSIONER

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Release #42-2025
nyc.gov/doi

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2025**

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**FORMER CEO AND BUSINESS PARTNER AT CITY-FUNDED NONPROFIT HOMELESS SERVICES PROVIDER
PLEAD GUILTY TO CONSPIRACY TO DEFRAUD NYC OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS**

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), issued the following statement on the guilty pleas by THOMAS BRANSKY, 49, the former Chief Executive Officer of Childrens Community Services Inc. (“CCS”), and his business partner, PETER WEISER, 82, on charges relating to a scheme to defraud New York City in connection with the provision of temporary housing and homeless services. On October 17, 2025, WEISER pled guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1349 before U.S. District Judge Vernon S. Broderick of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York; he is scheduled to be sentenced on February 27, 2026. Today, BRANSKY pled guilty before U.S. District Judge Broderick to one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 371 and is scheduled to be sentenced on February 25, 2026. DOI investigated this matter in partnership with the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York, which is prosecuting the case.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, “These defendants exploited their nonprofit organization and the City’s need for services for homeless New Yorkers to commit fraud, causing the City to pay over \$50 million to the nonprofit that it otherwise would not have, and that included inflated prices and unreasonable mark-ups for goods and services. Both defendants now have pled guilty and will be held accountable for their crimes. I thank the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York, our partners in the fight to protect critical public resources from wrongdoers.”

According to the indictment and superseding information, BRANSKY was the Chief Executive Officer of CCS, a not-for-profit homeless services provider that had over \$900 million in contracts with the City. As CEO, BRANSKY and others engaged in a scheme to defraud the City through CCS and a group of affiliated entities owned and controlled by WEISER, including by making and causing to be made false statements to the City of New York in order to obtain money. The scheme was furthered by electronic communications and bank wires and included submitting false statements and documents to the City to conceal WEISER’s role and ownership of the affiliated companies. CCS, and ultimately the City, paid over \$50 million to WEISER’s companies for various goods and services—many of which were provided by other, legitimate companies and then simply marked up as much as three times their actual cost. Through this scheme, WEISER collected more than \$7 million in illicit profits, while BRANSKY earned more than \$1.2 million in salary.

View the release on the October 2023 indictment of the defendants here:
<https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/ceo-and-business-partner-charged-massive-scheme-defraud-new-york-citys-homeless>

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Commissioner Strauber thanked Jay Clayton, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, for his office's partnership on this case, which is being prosecuted by the Office's Complex Frauds and Cybercrime Unit. Assistant United States Attorneys Nicholas Chiuchiolo, Ni Qian, and Matthew Weinberg are in charge of the prosecution. Commissioner Strauber also thanked the City Department of Social Services for its cooperation with the investigation.

At DOI, the investigation was conducted by Senior Investigative Auditor Helen Gromadsky, Assistant Inspector General Jeffrey Freeman, Assistant Inspector General Matin Modarressi and Chief Forensic Auditor/First Deputy Inspector General Ivette Morales in DOI's Office of the Inspector General for City-Funded Nonprofits, under the supervision of Senior Inspector General Andrew Sein, Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Initiatives Christopher Ryan, and Deputy Commissioner/ Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella.

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U.S. Department of Justice

Joseph Nocella, Jr.
United States Attorney
Eastern District of New York

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 11, 2025

Contact:

John Marzulli
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United States Attorney's Office
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PRESS RELEASE

**FORMER FISCAL OFFICER FOR BROOKLYN CHARITY SENTENCED TO
21 MONTHS' IMPRISONMENT FOR EMBEZZLEMENT**

***Defendant Admitted to Stealing Over \$2.3 Million from the Non-Profit Company and
Spent the Stolen Funds on Remodeling Her Home, Spa Treatment, and Luxury Goods***

BROOKLYN, NY – Marcia Joseph was sentenced today by United States District Judge Eric N. Vitaliano in federal court in Brooklyn to 21 months' imprisonment for embezzling funds from her employer, a non-profit organization based in Brooklyn that provides employment and education services for those in need (the Non-Profit). Joseph pleaded guilty to wire fraud in January 2024. As part of her sentence, Joseph was also ordered to pay \$2.3 million in restitution and forfeiture in the amount of \$2.3 million.

Joseph Nocella, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, Christopher G. Raia, Assistant Director in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI), and Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner, New York City Department of Investigation (DOI) announced the sentence.

“By stealing from a charity she was entrusted to serve, the defendant shamefully diverted resources from those in need to line her own pockets,” stated United States Attorney Nocella. “Today’s sentence makes clear that those who exploit non-profits for personal gain will face the loss of their freedom and serious financial penalties. Our Office is committed to protecting non-profit organizations and the communities that rely on them from fraudsters.”

“Marcia Joseph abused her position and access within a non-profit charity to steal more than two million dollars intended to fund critical employment and education services for the city,” stated FBI Assistant Director in Charge Raia. “For nearly two decades, Joseph selfishly prioritized her extravagant lifestyle at the expense of those who truly needed the

financial aid. The FBI remains committed to protecting vulnerable populations from becoming targets of fraudulent and exploitative schemes.”

“Non-profits that receive City funding provide critical services to New Yorkers. As a senior fiscal officer, this defendant had a duty to act in the best interests of this City-funded organization; instead she abused her position and access to steal over \$2.3 million, generating fictitious documentation to hide her theft for almost two decades. DOI thanks our law enforcement partners at the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York and the FBI for their commitment to protect the City’s precious resources for the benefit of their intended recipients,” stated DOI Commissioner Strauber.

According to court filings and statements made in court, Joseph was a former senior fiscal officer for the Non-Profit. Joseph admitted stealing \$2,339,700 from the Non-Profit and funneled the funds to a sham company she had set up. The invoices described services purportedly provided in connection with a New York City Department of Education educational program focusing on students in shelters and, later, job training for adults in shelters. Over the course of nearly 17 years, Joseph generated and submitted more than 500 fictitious invoices and manipulated the Non-Profit’s accounting systems to avoid detection. She used the stolen funds to pay for numerous personal expenses, including approximately \$235,000 in mortgage payments, \$207,000 in credit card payments, \$98,000 in car payments, \$45,000 in Amazon expenses, and various other personal items, such as home remodeling, spa treatment, landscaping expenses, and luxury goods.

The government’s case is being handled by the Office’s Public Integrity Section. Assistant United States Attorney Eric Silverberg is in charge of the prosecution. Assistant United States Attorney Claire S. Kedeshian of the Office’s Asset Recovery Section is handling forfeiture matters and Assistant United States Attorney Daniel Saavedra of the Office’s Financial Litigation Program is assisting with restitution matters.

The Defendant:

MARCIA JOSEPH (also known as “Marcia James,” “Marcia Lewis,” and “Marcia Peters”)
Age: 59
Baldwin, Long Island

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 24-CR-04 (ENV)



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, AUGUST 28, 2025

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**QUEENS MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO ACCEPTING OVER \$3,000 FROM
TWO UNDERCOVER DOI INVESTIGATORS POSING AS TLC LICENSE CANDIDATES
IN EXCHANGE FOR HELPING THEM CHEAT ON A TLC LICENSING EXAM**

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), issued the following statement on today’s guilty plea by AHOINSOU DJOGBESSI, 51, of Queens, N.Y., on charges related to his acceptance of over \$3,000 from two undercover DOI investigators (“Undercover 1” and “Undercover 2”) posing as applicants for drivers’ licenses issued by the City Taxi and Limousine Commission (“TLC”), in exchange for DJOGBESSI agreeing to take the TLC licensing test for the Undercover Investigators and helping one of them pass the test. DOI investigated this matter with the office of Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz, which is prosecuting the case.

DJOGBESSI was charged in a criminal complaint in July 2024 and indicted in July 2025 on charges that included Impairing the Integrity of a Government Licensing Examination, a class D felony, Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a class E felony, and several class A misdemeanors. DJOGBESSI pled guilty today to one count of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a class E felony. As part of the plea, DJOGBESSI agreed to pay a \$4,500 fine. He will be sentenced on September 9, 2025.

Commissioner Strauber said, “Facilitating cheating on exams required to obtain a City license in exchange for cash is a crime and undermines City regulations, including those involving public safety. With today’s guilty plea the defendant is held accountable for his conduct. I thank the Queens District Attorney’s Office for its partnership and commitment to ensure the integrity of City processes, and the TLC for its cooperation in this investigation.”

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz said, “It is imperative that all drivers learn the rules of the road and follow them, especially those who operate livery cars and are entrusted with keeping passengers safe. This defendant skirted the law by helping undercover investigators posing as TLC license applicants bypass mandated training and cheat on the licensing exam. Thank you to our partners at the Department of Investigation and for their work on this investigation.”

According to the criminal complaint, Undercover 1 visited DJOGBESSI’s office in August 2022, where DJOGBESSI explained that he could facilitate and expedite the TLC application process, and guarantee a passing test score on the TLC licensing exam, in exchange for a fee. In total, Undercover 1 paid \$2,370, plus a TLC application fee of \$257.04, to DJOGBESSI between October and December 2022. On December 20, 2022, DJOGBESSI met Undercover 1 at a TLC testing location and escorted Undercover 1 to a computer. Approximately 32 minutes into the 120-minute exam, DJOGBESSI walked over to

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Undercover 1's computer station, indicated that he should move over, then crouched down at Undercover 1's station below the cubicle wall and answered 79 of the 80 examination questions in eight minutes. With approximately 30 minutes of the exam remaining, DJOGBESSI instructed Undercover 1 to leave the room, at which point Undercover 1 was informed by another individual that he was free to leave and should check his email for exam results. Undercover 1 ultimately received a passing score on the exam. Later, in May 2024, Undercover 2 appeared at DJOGBESSI's offices and paid a first installment of \$1,270, plus a TLC application fee of \$257.04, to DJOGBESSI, pursuant to an agreement that DJOGBESSI would provide the same package of services to Undercover 2.

Commissioner Strauber thanked Queens County District Attorney Melinda Katz and her dedicated staff, including Assistant District Attorney Manaal Khokhar and Bureau Chief Christine Oliveri, both of the District Attorney's Public Corruption Bureau, which prosecuted the case. Commissioner Strauber also thanked TLC Commissioner David Do and his staff for their cooperation and assistance.

At DOI, the investigation was conducted by Assistant Inspector General Robert Miller and Director of Data Analytics Shyam Prasad, and was supervised by Deputy Inspector General Arturo Sanchez, Inspector General Audrey Feldman, Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Initiatives Christopher Ryan and Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2025**

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BROOKLYN MAN PLEADS GUILTY AND MUST PAY RESTITUTION IN CONNECTION WITH FRAUDULENTLY SUBMITTING ONLINE HEALTH SURVEYS TO ILLEGALLY OBTAIN NEARLY \$8,000 IN CITY-FUNDED GIFT CARDS

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), announced the guilty plea today of a Brooklyn man who used a “Bot program,” a computer program that performs automatic repetitive tasks, to answer hundreds of online health surveys in order to steal \$7,774 in electronic gift card (“e-gift card”) funds from the City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (“DOHMH”). The e-gift cards were offered as an incentive to complete two public health surveys distributed between August and November 2023. DOI’s investigation was prompted by a DOHMH report that the vendor administering the surveys, ABT Associates, noticed discrepancies on multiple survey submissions. The office of Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez prosecuted the case.

KENNY CHAI, 43, of Brooklyn, N.Y., pled guilty today to disorderly conduct, a violation. As part of the plea agreement, CHAI was sentenced to five days of community service and ordered to pay \$7,774 in restitution.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, “Today the defendant is held accountable for stealing from a City program that sought to incentivize City residents to provide important public health information, and must repay over \$7,000 to the City. I thank DOHMH for referring this matter to DOI and the Brooklyn District Attorney for its partnership and commitment to protect public resources.”

According to the criminal complaint, ABT Associates, on behalf of DOHMH, administered two public health surveys between August and November 2023; the Community Health Survey for adults and the Kid Survey for children ages one through 13. These surveys were designed to collect data from randomly selected City households to better understand the health status, behaviors, and needs of residents across the five boroughs. Households were eligible to receive an e-gift card as an incentive for completing the survey -- \$30 for each completed adult survey and \$25 for each completed child survey -- with a cap of one adult and two children per household, for a potential maximum of \$80 per household. Respondents were required to enter a valid email address in the portal to receive their e-gift cards electronically, distributed through a third-party vendor, Virtual Incentives.

According to the criminal complaint, CHAI’s household was legitimately selected to complete the survey in August 2023 and CHAI completed the survey, and then employed a Bot program to generate fraudulent User IDs and complete hundreds of additional surveys to obtain e-gift card incentives. Between August 2023 and November 2023, CHAI redeemed more than 250 fraudulently obtained e-gift cards using temporary email addresses and ultimately directed funds to PayPal and Amazon accounts linked to himself. Verizon records indicated CHAI completed the surveys and redeemed the e-gift cards via IP addresses

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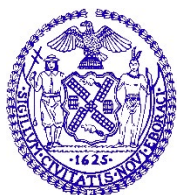
associated with his Brooklyn address. In all, funds from 277 e-gift cards were transferred to the defendant's Amazon and PayPal accounts and then to his personal bank accounts. Funds from 216 e-gift cards, totaling \$6,417.50, were uploaded to the defendant's Pay Pal accounts; and funds from 61 e-gift cards were uploaded to the defendant's Amazon.com account, totaling \$1,356.60. CHAI did not have permission and authority to obtain or retain the \$7,774.10 in e-gift card funds.

Commissioner Strauber thanked Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez for his Office's partnership on this investigation and prosecution, which is being handled by Assistant District Attorney Pamela Lowe and supervised by Assistant District Attorneys Adam Libove and Laura Neubauer, Deputy Chief and Chief of the District Attorney's Public Integrity Bureau, respectively. Commissioner Strauber also thanked DOHMH Acting Health Commissioner and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Michelle Morse, MPH, and her staff, for their report to DOI that led to this investigation and their assistance during the investigation.

At DOI, the investigation was conducted by Confidential Investigator Farhana Begum with DOI's Office of the Inspector General for DOHMH and was supervised by Assistant Inspector General Shakina Griffith, Deputy Inspector General Mary Kozlow, Inspector General Thomas Kapp, Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Initiatives Christopher Ryan and Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2025

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**PRINCIPALS OF FIRE ALARM REPAIR COMPANY SENTENCED TO PRISON TIME FOR
DECADE-LONG SCHEME TO DEFRAUD CITY AGENCIES BY OVERBILLING**

Earlier today, in federal court in Brooklyn, WALTER STANZIONE, 66, of East Meadow, N.Y., the principal of a fire alarm maintenance company, was sentenced to 56 months in prison on wire fraud conspiracy charges by United States District Judge Rachel P. Kovner. STANZIONE was the second of two co-defendants sentenced by Judge Kovner this week to prison in a decade-long scheme to defraud the City of New York by seeking payment on millions of dollars of grossly inflated fraudulent bills. STANZIONE was also ordered to pay \$1.6 million in forfeiture; restitution will be determined by the Court at a later date. On Tuesday, October 7, 2025, WILLIAM NEOGRA, 65, of Millsboro, DE, was sentenced to 22 months' incarceration, also on wire fraud conspiracy charges, followed by two years of supervised release; restitution will be determined by the Court at a later date. STANZIONE is scheduled to surrender on January 12, 2026 and NEOGRA, on January 12, 2026.

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner, New York City Department of Investigation (DOI); Joseph Nocella Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; Christopher G. Raia, Assistant Director in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI); and Harry T. Chavis, Jr., Special Agent in Charge, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation, New York (IRS-CI New York) partnered on this investigation and announced this week's sentencings.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, "For more than a decade, these defendants used shell companies and inflated invoices to overbill multiple City agencies, including the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, the Department of Education, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Department of Sanitation. As these sentences make clear, defrauding City taxpayers has serious consequences. I thank our federal law enforcement partners for their partnership and commitment to protecting City resources and holding accountable those who commit fraud."

Harry Chavis, Special Agent in Charge of IRS-CI New York said, "While millions of dollars were billed to the City of New York, Stanzone and Neogra packed their pockets with the illicit profit made from their elaborate scheme. This fraud of shell companies, inflated prices and false invoices may have seemed like a way to get-rich-quick—up until they got caught by law enforcement. Now these sentencings will see to it that both Stanzone and Neogra will face prison time for stealing from City taxpayers to fund their own greedy interests."

As set forth in various public court filings and in court proceedings, the defendants controlled Fire Alarm Electrical Corp., a company that held numerous contracts with City agencies to repair and maintain fire alarm systems. For more than a decade, the defendants overbilled those agencies by submitting fraudulent invoices with dramatically inflated prices.

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They accomplished this scheme in several ways:

- The defendants created numerous shell companies that were secretly owned by defendant STANZIONE. After purchasing supplies from legitimate retailers, the defendants would re-invoice the parts through the shell companies for roughly three to five times the real purchase price, ultimately passing along those “costs” to the City.
- The defendants took advantage of pre-existing shell companies that were being used in other ongoing frauds. For example, the defendants used shell companies created by convicted EDNY defendant David Motovich, which Motovich had used in an entirely separate fraud scheme that was also investigated and prosecuted by DOI, EDNY, FBI, and IRS (21-CR-497).
- When City auditors became suspicious of the shell companies, the defendants fraudulently modified the documents of legitimate retailers, passing off the altered invoices from these companies as if they were genuine.

These methods enabled the defendants to submit millions of dollars of fictitious payment requests to four separate City agencies over an eleven-year period. Defendant STANZIONE, the leader of the fraud, then siphoned off much of the ill-gotten gains and used the stolen money to fund his family’s lavish spending habits.

Commissioner Strauber thanked Joseph Nocella Jr., U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York for his office’s partnership on this case, which is being prosecuted by the Office’s Public Integrity Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Erik Paulsen, Michael Gibaldi and Eric Silverberg are in charge of the prosecution, with the assistance of Paralegal Specialist Kavya Kannan. Commissioner Strauber also thanked Christopher G. Raia, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI New York Field Office and his dedicated staff, as well as Harry Chavis, Special Agent in Charge of IRS-CI New York, and his staff, for their partnership on this investigation.

The investigation was conducted by Anastasia Plakas, formerly the Assistant Inspector General of DOI’s Office of the Inspector General for the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (currently DOI’s Director of Vendor Integrity) and was supervised by Deputy Inspector General Aleksandro Tilka, Inspector General Ann Petterson, Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Initiatives Christopher Ryan, and Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella.

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U.S. Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 24, 2025

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PRESS RELEASE

FOUR INDIVIDUALS PLEAD GUILTY TO CONSPIRACIES TO MISAPPROPRIATE FUNDS OF NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION SERVING THE HOMELESS

Employees of Organization Engaged in Two Separate Schemes to Authorize Payments Worth Millions to Vendors That They Secretly Profited From

Earlier today, at the federal court in Brooklyn, Luis Camarena pleaded guilty to a conspiracy kickback scheme. Camarena received revenue from contracts to install surveillance cameras at homeless shelters run by a non-profit organization (the "Organization"). He conspired to pay a portion of that revenue to the employees of the Organization who authorized the payments to his business. The proceeding was held before United States District Judge Hector Gonzalez. When sentenced, Camarena faces up to five years' imprisonment.

Camarena is the fourth and final defendant to plead guilty in this case. Earlier this month, Camarena's co-defendants Gary DSilva, Jonathan Velazquez, and Pradeep Nigam each pleaded guilty to the same or similar charges. DSilva and Velazquez were employees of the Organization, who authorized payments to Camarena and to Nigam, whose businesses provided security cameras and information-technology services, respectively, to the Organization. DSilva, Velazquez, and Nigam each also face up to five years' imprisonment at their respective sentencing. The defendants have also agreed as part of their pleas to pay a total of \$1,025,647.78 in restitution to the Organization.

Joseph Nocella, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI); and Christopher G. Raia, Assistant Director in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI) announced the guilty pleas.

“Camerena’s schemes enriched himself, DSilva, and Velazquez at the expense of the non-profit Organization, showing glaring disrespect towards the honest work of others,” stated United States Attorney Nocella. “Our Office remains committed to seeking justice for all victims of bribery and kickback schemes and prosecuting those who perpetrate such offenses.”

“These four defendants enriched themselves at the expense of a City-funded nonprofit; two employees of the organization pocketed kickbacks in exchange for steering contracts worth millions to the businesses of two co-conspirators,” stated DOI Commissioner Strauber. “With today’s guilty plea, all four defendants have now acknowledged their involvement in a scheme to steal funds intended to support City programs. I thank the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York and the New York Office of the FBI for their continued partnership and commitment to protect public funds.”

As alleged in the superseding indictment and discussed in court proceedings and other documents, DSilva and Velazquez were employed in the Management Information Systems department of the Organization, which is based in Brooklyn. The Organization supplied a number of services to indigent New Yorkers, including administering multiple homeless shelters. DSilva and Velazquez, as part of their work for the Organization, were responsible for soliciting vendors to complete various projects involving information technology and approving payments to those vendors.

DSilva and Velazquez entered into two separate schemes to enrich themselves at the expense of the Organization. In the first scheme, they agreed to steer contracts for the installation of surveillance cameras at homeless shelters operated by the Organization to Camarena’s business in exchange for a share of the profits. Neither DSilva nor Velazquez ever disclosed their secret interest in Camarena’s business to the Organization. In the second, DSilva and Velazquez entered into a similar agreement with Nigam, in which DSilva and Velazquez received a share of the profits from Nigam’s business in exchange for authorizing payments from the Organization to that business. In one instance, DSilva, using a personal email account, sent to Nigam an invoice for Nigam’s business to submit to the Organization. As part of the conspiracy, Nigam regularly sent money to companies in the names of relatives of DSilva and Velazquez.

In total, DSilva and Velazquez authorized approximately \$1.6 million in payments from the Organization to Camarena’s business and approximately \$1.9 million from the Organization to Nigam’s business during the operation of the schemes. As part of the pleas, DSilva and Velazquez each agreed to forfeit approximately \$714,000; Nigam agreed to forfeit approximately \$413,000; and Camarena agreed to forfeit approximately \$224,000. These figures correspond to the illicit proceeds received by the defendants from the schemes.

The government’s case is being handled by the Office’s Public Integrity Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Turner Buford and Laura Zuckerwise are in charge of the prosecution with assistance from Paralegal Specialist Johnson Peow.

The Defendants:

GARY DSILVA (also known as “Pankaj Dsilva”)

Age: 47

Manalapan, NJ

JONATHAN VELAZQUEZ

Age: 55

Massapequa Park, NJ

LUIS A. CAMARENA

Age: 58

Bronx, NY

PRADEEP NIGAM

Age: 63

Edison, NJ

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 24-CR-471 (S-1) (HG)



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2025**

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

PRESIDENT OF QUEENS-BASED CONSTRUCTION COMPANY SENTENCED TO 48 MONTHS IN PRISON FOR SCHEME TO DEFRAUD THE CITY IN CONNECTION WITH HOMELESS SHELTER CONTRACTS

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), issued the following statement on the prison sentence for LIAQUAT CHEEMA, the President of AFL Construction Co. Inc. (“AFL”), a City-funded vendor based in Queens, for leading a scheme to defraud the City of New York in connection with AFL’s \$12 million in City contracts with the Department of Homeless Services (“DHS”). AFL performed general contracting at City homeless shelters. DOI investigated this case with the Northeast Region of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (“DOL-OIG”); and the Office of the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, which prosecuted the case.

LIAQUAT CHEEMA, 65, of East Elmhurst, N.Y., pled guilty on March 5, 2024, to Conspiracy to Commit Wire Fraud and was sentenced today by U.S. District Judge Lorna G. Schofield in the Southern District of New York to 48 months in prison, followed by two years of supervised release. As part of his plea agreement, CHEEMA agreed to pay \$3,267,811 in restitution and forfeiture. He is scheduled to surrender on October 31, 2025.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, “Over three years, this defendant stole millions of dollars from the City, by overcharging for maintenance and other work that AFL was contracted to perform at City homeless shelters, through submission of falsified invoices and other documentation. Now he will serve 48 months in prison, because theft of funds intended to improve the housing available to City residents in need has serious consequences. I thank the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York and our federal law enforcement partners for their commitment to protect City funds.”

According to the criminal complaint and indictment, CHEEMA was the president of AFL, a vendor with public contracts with the City worth approximately \$12 million, to perform general contracting work at City homeless shelters. According to the contracts, AFL was to perform, among other things, general maintenance, landscaping, roofing, and snow removal at shelter sites. Between 2014 through about 2017, CHEEMA and others submitted fraudulent invoices and other documentation in support of requests for payment on the contracts, falsely claiming certain workers had performed work on certain projects when they had not, and inflating the amounts paid by the defendant for materials supposedly used on projects. The fraudulent invoices and supporting documentation contained, without authorization, names and in at least one case, a social security number, of “workers” had not actually worked on the projects specified in the requests for payment.

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CHEEMA and others also obtained tens of thousands of dollars' worth of Medicaid benefits by repeatedly submitting fraudulent certifications, which underreported their actual incomes and enabled them to obtain Medicaid benefits for which they were not eligible. In support of requests for Medicaid benefits, CHEEMA and others repeatedly submitted nearly identical employment letters, which contained the name and alleged signature of a "Project Manager" who, in fact, was deceased. In connection with his guilty plea, CHEEMA agreed to pay back the money misappropriated from Medicaid.

CHEEMA's co-defendants, KHIZAR HAYAT, SHOUKET CHUDHARY, and IRFAN BAJWA were sentenced earlier this year. In February 2025, HAYAT was sentenced to time served followed by three years' supervised release and ordered to forfeit \$43,000 and pay restitution of \$101,000. In April 2025, CHUDHARY was sentenced to time served followed by three years' supervised release and ordered to forfeit \$397,000 and pay restitution of \$466,000. In September 2025, BAJWA was sentenced to time served followed by two and a half years' supervised release, with the first six months served as home detention, and ordered to forfeit \$267,000 and pay restitution of \$331,000.

Commissioner Strauber thanked Jay Clayton, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York for his office's partnership on this case, which is being prosecuted by the Office's Complex Frauds and Cybercrime Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorney Timothy V. Capozzi is in charge of the prosecution. Commissioner Strauber also thanked the Northeast Region of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General ("DOL-OIG") for its partnership on this investigation.

At DOI, the investigation was conducted by Assistant Inspector General Alexandra Davie and Acting Inspector General Jeremy Reyes in DOI's Office of the Inspector General for the City Department of Homeless Services, with the assistance of Director of Audits Laila Yu, Senior Investigative Auditor Yanyan Wang and Senior Investigative Auditor Carmen Wong in DOI's Investigative Auditing Unit. The investigation was supervised by Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Initiatives Christopher Ryan and Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella.

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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UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Southern District of New York

U.S. ATTORNEY JAY CLAYTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, December 11, 2025
<http://www.justice.gov/usao/nys>

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CEO OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS CONSTRUCTION COMPANY CHARGED WITH COMMERCIAL BRIBERY, FRAUD, AND WITNESS TAMPERING OFFENSES

United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Jay Clayton, Assistant Director in Charge of the New York Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), Christopher G. Raia, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), Jocelyn E. Strauber, Special Agent in Charge of the New York Regional Office of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation's Office of Inspector General ("FDIC-OIG"), Patricia Tarasca, and Special Agent in Charge of the New York Field Office of Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation ("IRS-CI"), Harry T. Chavis, Jr., announced today the unsealing of an Indictment charging ANTHONY TEPEDINO—the founder, chief executive officer ("CEO"), and owner of a telecommunications construction and engineering company (the "Construction Company") based in New Jersey—with commercial bribery, fraud, and witness tampering offenses. TEPEDINO was arrested this morning and will be presented today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Barbara Moses. The case is assigned to U.S. District Judge Richard M. Berman.

"As alleged, Anthony Tepedino turned a major construction company into his personal cash machine, stealing from companies that serve New Yorkers, bribing insiders, and lying to banks to keep the scheme alive," said U.S. Attorney Jay Clayton. "Fraud and corruption hurt real people in this city, and we will hold accountable any executive who abuses the trust placed in them."

"Anthony Tepedino allegedly stole millions of dollars from his own company by fabricating fake businesses, invoices, and even a story to conceal his misconduct," said FBI Assistant Director in Charge Christopher G. Raia. "Rather than serve the best interest of his company, Tepedino allegedly abused his rank as CEO and founder to mislead trusted customers and steer their money into his private accounts. The FBI will continue to investigate those who exploit their authoritative position to defraud others for personal profits."

"As alleged, this defendant engaged in various fraud schemes, stealing millions of dollars from a company he founded and controlled through the use of shell companies and fake documents, and using some of those stolen funds to make commercial bribe payments to a co-conspirator in exchange for steering new contracts, also worth millions, to his company," said DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber. "I thank the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District

of New York and our federal law enforcement partners for their work on this important investigation.”

“The FDIC-OIG is pleased to join our law enforcement colleagues in announcing this indictment,” said FDIC-OIG Special Agent in Charge Patricia Tarasca. “The charges reflected in this indictment reinforce the FDIC-OIG’s commitment to investigating allegations of fraud, bribery, and other crimes, as we seek to preserve the integrity of our Nation’s financial system.”

“The allegations against Tepedino paint a rainbow of fraud and criminal acts over more than half a decade,” said IRS-CI Special Agent in Charge Harry T. Chavis, Jr. “Bribery, bank fraud, and stealing from his own company are on the list of ways he’s alleged to have funded his life of luxury. IRS-CI continues to partner in investigations and use its financial expertise to subject alleged conduct like Tepedino’s to justice.”

As alleged in the Indictment:[¹]

From at least in or about 2018 through in or about 2024, TEPEDINO—the CEO, founder, and sole shareholder of the Construction Company—engaged in a series of schemes to defraud the Construction Company’s largest customer (the “Victim Company”), its largest creditor (the “Victim Bank”), and the Construction Company itself. To carry out these schemes, TEPEDINO and others formed shell companies, created fake invoices, and looted the Construction Company of more than \$5 million. TEPEDINO then used some of those proceeds to bribe an employee of the Victim Company and to make millions of dollars in payments to himself, his relatives, and to his creditors.

The Construction Company was in operation for over a decade and eventually grew to earn up to hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue annually and to employ more than 500 people. TEPEDINO abused his position as the head of the Construction Company to steal from the company, fund a lavish lifestyle, and commit commercial bribery, bank fraud, wire fraud, and aggravated identity theft.

Beginning in or about 2018, TEPEDINO and a co-conspirator (“CC-1”) submitted false invoices to the Construction Company to generate fraudulent payments to a non-operational shell company (“Shell Company-1”) controlled by CC-1. To conceal their scheme, TEPEDINO and CC-1 falsely claimed Shell Company-1 was owned by a third party (“Individual-1”) and had CC-1 impersonate Individual-1 when communicating with the Construction Company on behalf of Shell Company-1. This scheme continued until at least in or about September 2024, by which time TEPEDINO and CC-1 had stolen at least \$5 million from the Construction Company.

From in or about 2020 through in or about September 2024, TEPEDINO used some of the money he stole from the Construction Company to fund more than \$1 million in commercial bribe payments to a second co-conspirator (“CC-2”), who was a senior manager at the Victim Company. These bribe payments were made in exchange for CC-2 steering new contracts worth millions of dollars to the Construction Company, assigning work to the Construction Company, and approving invoices submitted by the Construction Company. In total, the Victim Company paid the Construction Company more than \$300 million during the approximately four years that Tepedino was bribing CC-2.

¹ As the introductory phrase signifies, the entirety of the Indictment and the descriptions of the Indictment set forth herein constitute only allegations, and every fact described should be treated as an allegation.

While defrauding the Construction Company and bribing CC-2, TEPEDINO also committed bank fraud. From in or about late 2021 through early 2022, TEPEDINO sought more than \$18 million in commercial credit from the Victim Bank on behalf of the Construction Company. As part of this credit application, TEPEDINO made and caused to be made false statements and omissions regarding the Construction Company's relationship with Shell Company-1 and his dealings with CC-2.

Finally, to conceal his offense conduct from law enforcement, in or about September 2024 and thereafter, TEPEDINO attempted to engage in witness tampering by seeking to cause CC-1 and CC-2 to adopt false exculpatory narratives to explain their criminal conduct.

* * *

TEPEDINO, 61, of Manalapan, New Jersey, is charged with one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and honest services wire fraud, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison; one count of wire fraud, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison; one count of honest services wire fraud, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison; one count of aggravated identity theft, which carries a mandatory consecutive sentence of two years in prison; one count of bank fraud, which carries a maximum sentence of 30 years in prison; and one count of witness tampering, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.

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

Mr. Clayton praised the outstanding investigative work of the FBI, DOI, FDIC-OIG, IRS-CI, and the Special Agents and Task Force Officers of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York.

The prosecution of this case is being handled by the Office's Public Corruption Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jessica Greenwood, Matthew King, and Daniel H. Wolf are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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U.S. Department of Justice

John J. Durham
United States Attorney
Eastern District of New York

271 Cadman Plaza East
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 13, 2025

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PRESS RELEASE

FOUNDER AND CEO OF NON-PROFIT AND TWO OTHERS CHARGED WITH FRAUD, BRIBERY AND MONEY LAUNDERING OFFENSES

Through Kickbacks and Bribes, Defendants Illegally Diverted Tens of Millions of Dollars from COVID-19 Emergency Housing Program to Enrich Themselves

Earlier today, at the federal court in Brooklyn, an indictment was unsealed charging Julio Medina, Christopher Dantzler and Weihong Hu with conspiracy to commit wire fraud, honest-services wire fraud, money laundering conspiracy, conspiracy to violate the Travel Act and the use of a facility of interstate commerce in aid of commercial bribery. This morning, Dantzler was arrested on Long Island, Hu in Manhattan and Medina in the Bronx. They will be arraigned this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge James R. Cho.

John J. Durham, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner, New York City Department of Investigation (DOI) and James E. Dennehy, Assistant Director in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI), announced the arrests and charges.

“The defendants’ brazen and illegal kickback scheme stole money from the City of New York that was intended to provide emergency housing and support services during the pandemic,” stated United States Attorney Durham. “Shamefully, the defendants saw the pandemic as an opportunity to line their pockets with stacks of cash, finance a luxury vehicle, purchase homes and pay off personal debts. While New York City was trying to curb the spread of COVID-19, the defendants exploited a nonprofit organization to enrich themselves. My Office will relentlessly pursue those who steal public funds and deprive members of our community of crucial resources.”

DOI Commissioner Strauber stated: “As charged, these defendants, an Executive Director of a City-funded nonprofit and the principals of the nonprofit’s subcontractors, engaged

in and concealed a bribery and kickback scheme, pocketing millions of dollars of funds intended to provide emergency housing and support services in New York City during the COVID-19 pandemic. I thank the Mayor's Office of Risk Management and Compliance for the referral to DOI that prompted this investigation and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York and the FBI for their partnership and commitment to protect critical public resources."

"These three defendants allegedly pocketed millions of dollars from public funds allocated for emergency housing during the pandemic," stated FBI Assistant Director in Charge Dennehy. "This alleged kickback scheme abused a program designed to provide a vulnerable population with healthier, unexposed lodging alternatives, to finance enhancements to the defendants' lifestyles. The FBI will never tolerate any individual who twists public programs into a mechanism to sell services for personal profit."

As alleged in the indictment, Medina founded and served as the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of a non-profit organization that, among other things, provided various reentry services to formerly incarcerated individuals (the "Organization"). In June 2020, the New York City Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) contracted with the Organization to administer an emergency transitional housing program (the "Emergency Housing Program"), in partnership with local hotels and other businesses, to combat the spread of COVID-19 in New York City jails. The Organization subsequently entered into agreements with various hotels to operate as reentry hotels under the Emergency Housing Program. In total, between June 2020 and December 2023, the Organization received approximately \$122 million in public funds from MOCJ to operate the Emergency Housing Program at these hotels.

Dantzler and Hu each operated or controlled businesses that received tens of millions of dollars in public funds from the Organization under the Emergency Housing Program. Dantzler's company purported to provide security services at the reentry hotels but was not a licensed security company and did not, in fact, provide security services. Hu operated or controlled two hotels in Queens that operated as reentry hotels under the Emergency Housing Program and was a member of a repurposed catering company that provided food services to formerly incarcerated individuals residing at reentry hotels under the Emergency Housing Program.

Medina solicited and accepted bribes and kickbacks from Dantzler and Hu in exchange for Medina providing business through the Organization to Dantzler's and Hu's respective businesses under the Emergency Housing Program. Among other bribes and kickbacks, Dantzler and Hu purchased Medina an approximately \$1.3 million townhouse; Hu, through one of her businesses, financed a luxury vehicle for Medina valued at approximately \$107,000; and Dantzler paid to purchase and renovate a house for Medina for approximately \$750,000.

As depicted in the following photograph, during an in-person meeting in September 2020, Hu also provided Medina with a stack of wrapped U.S. currency in exchange

for two checks from the Organization made out to Hu's catering company, totaling more than \$187,000.



In total, Dantzler and Hu provided Medina with at least \$2.5 million in U.S. currency and in-kind benefits in exchange for Medina steering approximately \$51 million in public funds from the Emergency Housing Program to Dantzler's and Hu's businesses. In turn, Dantzler's security company received approximately \$21 million in public funds from the Organization under the Emergency Housing Program, of which Dantzler personally retained approximately \$9 million in public funds. Hu's hotels received approximately \$12 million in public funds from the Organization under the Emergency Housing Program, while her repurposed catering company received approximately \$17 million in public funds.

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

The government's case is being handled by the Office's Public Integrity Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Meredith A. Arfa, Eric Silverberg and Sean M. Sherman are in charge of the prosecution, with assistance from Paralegal Specialists Kavya Kannan and Rebecca Roth.

The Defendants:

JULIO MEDINA

Age: 64

Clifton Park, New York

CHRISTOPHER DANTZLER

Age: 49

Baldwin, New York

WEIHONG HU
Age: 59
Manhattan, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 25-CR-54 (RPK)