



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF BRONX ORGANIZATION
SENTENCED FOR FEDERAL PROGRAM FRAUD INVOLVING
FORMER NEW YORK STATE SENATOR**

LEV L. DASSIN, Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, ROSE GILL HEARN, the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), and RONALD J. VERROCHIO, the Inspector-in-Charge of the New York Office of the United States Postal Inspection Service ("USPIS"), announced that NEIL BERGER, the former Executive Director of Pathways for Youth, Inc. ("Pathways"), was sentenced today by United States District Judge WILLIAM H. PAULEY III in Manhattan federal court to two years of probation, including six months of home detention and a \$2,000 fine for federal program fraud.

According to Count Five of the Superseding Indictment, to which BERGER had pleaded guilty, and BERGER's plea allocution:

At various times from October 1999 to May 2006, BERGER served as Executive Director of Pathways, a not-for-profit organization whose stated mission at the time of its founding was, among other things, to "improve and further generally the welfare and happiness of young people," and, to those ends, "to receive donation[s], to receive, manage, take, hold real and personal property by gift, grant, devise or bequest." During the relevant period, former New York State Senator EFRAIN GONZALEZ, JR., directed that the New York State Legislature provide

hundreds of thousands of dollars in "member items" funding to Pathways. During the same time period, Pathways also received funding from numerous federal agencies. Pathways, in turn, directed hundreds of thousands of dollars to West Bronx Neighborhood Association ("WBNA"), a not-for-profit organization associated with GONZALEZ JR.

BERGER, 57, of Teaneck, New Jersey, entered his plea of guilty to federal program fraud on March 30, 2009. At that time BERGER specifically admitted that, after receiving indications that WBNA was being used for the fraudulent purpose of paying the personal expenses of GONZALEZ, JR., he deliberately avoided learning the truth and, instead, caused Pathways to send \$25,000 to WBNA and permitted WBNA to keep another \$25,000 that it had already received from Pathways.

BERGER's co-defendants, EFRAIN GONZALEZ JR., LUCIA SANCHEZ, and MIGUEL CASTANOS each pleaded guilty earlier this year and are scheduled to be sentenced at a later date.

In imposing sentence, Judge PAULEY noted that BERGER's criminal conduct "deprived the community of the resources it so desperately needs."

Mr. DASSIN commended the investigative work of DOI and USPIS and thanked them for their assistance.

This case is being prosecuted by the Office's Public Corruption Unit. Assistant United States Attorneys MICHAEL LEVY and PABLO QUIÑONES are in charge of the prosecution.

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