



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 28, 2019

Attorney General's Press Office/ 212-416-8060 nyag.pressoffice@ag.ny.gov

Attorney General James, Comptroller DiNapoli, and Department of Investigation Commissioner Garnett Announce Guilty Verdict of Non-Profit Executive in Corruption Scheme

Anna Mendez, Formerly of Tremont Crotona Day Care Center, Was Convicted of Indirectly Giving Straw Donations to NYC City Council Candidate Albert Alvarez

NEW YORK – Attorney General Letitia James, State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli, and New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Margaret Garnett today announced that non-profit executive Anna Mendez was convicted of using money stolen from a non-profit to fund straw political contributions to NYC Council candidate Albert Alvarez.

Mendez' conviction makes the fifth public disposition in the investigation of wide ranging corruption at Tremont Crotona, Inc., and A&G Early Learn Community Network, the two non-profit day care centers where Mendez worked. Mendez was convicted of 10 counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a class E felony, in the Supreme Court of New York County.

"Public corruption, on any level and in any form, will not be tolerated in New York State," said **Attorney General James**. "Anna Mendez took advantage of the democratic process by illegally using non-profit funds for political gain. My office will continue to root out corruption, and hold bad actors responsible for their actions."

"A jury heard the overwhelming evidence and reached the conclusion that Ms. Mendez was guilty," said **New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli**. "The message is clear, if you break the law, you're going to get caught and you're going pay the price. My thanks and gratitude go to State Attorney General James and NYC Department of Investigation Commissioner Margaret Garnett for their efforts to ensure justice was served in this case."

"Today's conviction sends the important message that individuals who submit false documents in order to defraud the City of New York will be held accountable," said **New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Margaret Garnett**. "This defendant's actions corrupted the City's campaign finance and contracting systems, both of which are vital to the public's trust in government. DOI will continue to work with the state Attorney General's Office and fellow law enforcement agencies to uncover and stop this type of corruption."

Mendez and her co-conspirator, George Gonzalez, were arraigned for their roles in the false filings on January 10, 2018. Mendez and Gonzalez provided funds to other employees of Tremont Crotona Day Care Center to contribute to Alvarez. Gonzalez also distributed contribution cards to these employees, which he had them falsely make out in their own names to conceal the true source of the funds. The money was, in reality, stolen from Tremont Crotona Day Care Center. Alvarez then collected the money and false contribution cards. Even though he knew the contribution cards were false, Alvarez submitted them to the New York City Campaign Finance Board (the "CFB") to steal at least \$4,500 in public matching funds. In total, Alvarez received \$92,400 in public matching funds. Alvarez plead guilty to one count of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the Second Degree, a Class A misdemeanor in connection with the case.

Gonzalez also pleaded guilty to felony counts of Grand Larceny and Offering a False Instrument for filing in connection with his role in the straw donation scheme. Additionally, former Tremont Crotona, Inc., Chairman of the Board, Alexander Pena, pled guilty to Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree for his role in corruption at the non-profit.

Since 2011, the Attorney General and State Comptroller have worked together to fight corruption through their Joint Task Force on Public Integrity. They have brought charges against dozens of individuals implicated in public corruption schemes around the state – resulting in the return of over \$11 million in restitution to taxpayers through these convictions.

The Attorney General would also like to thank the New York City Department of Investigation for their partnership on this investigation. The case was investigated by First Deputy Inspector General Ivette Morales under the supervision of Inspector General Andrew Sein, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella, and First Deputy Commissioner Daniel Cort.

Prosecuting the case are Assistant Attorneys General Kevin B. Frankel and Gregory D. Morrill of the Attorney General's Public Integrity Bureau, under the supervision of Bureau Chief Travis Hill. The Criminal Justice Division is led by Executive Deputy Attorney General Jose Maldonado. The investigation was led by Investigator Steven Broomer of the Attorney General's Investigations Bureau, under the supervision of Supervising Investigator Mike Leahy and Deputy Chief Investigator John McManus. Senior Legal Support Analyst Rachel Demma and Legal Analyst Jack Jones of the Public Integrity Bureau also assisted in the investigation.

###