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PRESS RELEASE

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**DA DONOVAN: SECTION 8 ‘FAKES’ LIED ABOUT INCOME TO
QUALIFY FOR UNDESERVED HOUSING SUBSIDIES**

****** 19 Islanders, including a NYCHA Employee, Stole Hundreds of Thousands of Dollars in Benefits;
Two Others Charged by Feds in Bribery Scheme******

STATEN ISLAND, NY - Richmond County District Attorney Daniel M. Donovan, Jr. and the Office of the Inspector General of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) today announced the arrest of 19 Staten Islanders on charges that include Grand Larceny and Falsifying Business Records for intentionally under-reporting income in order to bilk the federal government out of hundreds of thousands of dollars in federal housing benefits.

The investigation found that over a four-year period, the defendants – who have been tenants of the Park Hill apartment complex in Clifton and the Elbee Gardens apartments in Concord– bilked HUD out of more than \$377,000 of taxpayer-funded subsidies they did not deserve. Some defendants are also being charged with Tax Evasion for failing to report their HUD benefits on their tax returns.

One defendant, 56-year-old Juliette Joyner, an employee of the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), received over \$22,000 in rental subsidies in 2006 and 2009. Joyner reported to HUD that she made only \$9,731 in 2008 in order to receive rental assistance. But financial records revealed she made \$55,769 that year.

“It’s disgraceful that someone like Joyner, who works for an agency that is supposed to be committed to helping low- and moderate-income families, is stealing from them,” said D.A. Donovan. “And that is exactly what all of these defendants have been doing – stealing money from taxpayers and stealing housing assistance from those really need it.”

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development - Office of Inspector General Special Agent in Charge Cortez Richardson stated: “The arrest of these individuals is an example of HUD-OIG’s commitment to investigate those who take advantage and defraud the Section 8 program. This joint effort with the Richmond County District Attorney’s Office demonstrates our continued dedication to combat fraud with our law enforcement partners to bring those responsible to justice.”

(continued)

The investigation also led to the arrests of Tanya Green, the building manager of Elbee Gardens at 1950 Clove Road; and Juan Gomez, the building's superintendent, on federal charges for taking tens of thousands of dollars in bribes to "bump" people to the top of the Section 8 waiting list.

Gomez would often solicit prospective tenants for the bribes – which were, in some cases, as much as \$10,000. Green would then backdate the HUD applications so that person would be the next in line to receive a coveted subsidized apartment.

More than 120,000 families are on a waiting list for Section 8 Housing at any given time in New York City, according to HUD statistics. Because of such high demand and extremely low vacancy rates (less than .5%), some families wait up to 10 years for the subsidized housing.

The 19 defendants have been arraigned at Stapleton Criminal Court. The top charges they face carry a maximum penalty of 1 1/3 to 4 years in prison.

Defendants Green and Gomez were arraigned separately in Federal Court in Brooklyn on charges including Conspiracy, Bribery and Theft of Government Funds.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Jeffrey Curiale, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Amy Legow, Bureau Chief of Investigations; and was investigated by the HUD Office of Inspector General and the Richmond County D.A. Detective Squad, under the supervision of Lt. Kevin Gallagher.

The charges contained in the criminal complaints are merely allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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