



The City of New York
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**DOI STATEMENT ON SENTENCING OF FORMER CITY HEALTH INSPECTOR TO PRISON
FOR ACCEPTING BRIBES TO OVERLOOK VIOLATIONS AT PUBLICLY-FUNDED DAY CARE CENTERS**

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), issued the following statement on the sentencing of a former Public Health Sanitarian at the City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene ("DOHMH") to 24 months in prison for his role in a massive fraud and bribery scheme in which City employees collected bribes to arrange City funding and permits for day care centers in Brooklyn and Staten Island. EMILE NEKHALA, 62, pleaded guilty in January 2011 to the federal offense of Bribery Concerning Programs Receiving Federal Funds for the cash bribes he accepted in return for overlooking or reducing health violations at publicly-funded day care centers. U.S. District Judge Colleen McMahon sentenced NEKHALA today in U.S. District Court in Manhattan and also ordered his sentence to be followed by two years of supervised release. NEKHALA paid \$25,000 in forfeiture as part of his sentence. The office of Preet Bharara, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, prosecuted the case.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "This former City Health Inspector accepted cash payoffs and compromised the safety of children at the day cares he inspected. But DOI's investigation of this wide-ranging scheme, which reached into several City agencies, showed the defendants had hijacked the City's day-care benefit program for their own gain. As a result, this defendant is now a convicted felon headed to prison. DOI thanks its federal law enforcement partners for their dedicated work in exposing and stopping the scourge of public corruption and holding perpetrators accountable."

NEKHALA began employment at DOHMH in May 1993 and resigned in August 2010, shortly after he was arrested and charged in this case. At the time he resigned, he was receiving an annual salary of about \$52,568.

Today's sentencing is the first in a multi-defendant case in which eight other defendants have pleaded guilty. The defendants were arrested in August 2010 following an investigation by DOI and its federal law enforcement partners that exposed a scheme to defraud the City's day care subsidy program several ways, including requesting reimbursement for services to children who never received them, using children's names without their parents' knowledge, bribing City employees, and steering low-income parents to enroll children in the day care centers associated with the defendants.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked Preet Bharara, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York; James T. Hayes, Jr., Special Agent-in-Charge of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) office in New York; DOHMH Commissioner Dr. Thomas Farley; Robert Doar, Commissioner of the City Human Resources Administration; John Mattingly, Commissioner of the City Administration for Children's Services, and their staffs, for their assistance in this investigation.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Michael Bosworth, Harris Fischman, and Brent Wible of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country. The agency investigates and refers for prosecution City employees and contractors engaged in corrupt or fraudulent activities or unethical conduct. 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.

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