



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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**DOI ARRESTS BROOKLYN RESIDENT ON CHARGES OF CONCEALING INCOME TO
FRAUDULENTLY OBTAIN THOUSANDS IN SECTION 8, SOCIAL SECURITY AND WELFARE BENEFITS**
--The arrest is a result of a multi-agency investigation--

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced today the arrest of a Brooklyn woman on charges of concealing her spouse's income to fraudulently obtain more than \$50,000 in Section 8 subsidies from the City Department of Housing Preservation and Development ("HPD") and thousands of dollars in Social Security benefits and welfare subsidies. DOI joined with the City Human Resources Administration's ("HRA") Bureau of Fraud Investigation ("BFI") and the Social Security Administration, Office of the Inspector General ("SSA/OIG") to investigate the matter. The office of Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes is prosecuting the case.

SYLVIA FERMAINT, 45, has been indicted on charges of Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, a class C felony; three counts of Grand Larceny in the Third Degree and one count of Welfare Fraud in the Third Degree, class D felonies; and one count of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a class E felony. Upon conviction, a class C felony is punishable by up to 15 years in prison, a class D felony by up to seven years in prison and a class E felony by up to four years in prison.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "These charges drive home the important message that concealing income to fraudulently obtain housing and other public benefits will be exposed and prosecuted. DOI's commitment to preserving these valuable taxpayer subsidies for the individuals entitled to them is unwavering. As today's arrest demonstrates, we will effectively join with our law enforcement partners to uncover this type of corruption."

Special Agent in Charge of SSA/OIG Edward J. Ryan said, "Our office is committed to track down and bring to justice anyone who illegally siphons Social Security funds through fraud, lies, and concealment. These funds are meant to be a safety net for the most vulnerable of our society, the elderly and the disabled. I commend the hard work of our partners in this effort, the New York City Department of Investigation, the New York City Human Resources Administration Bureau of Fraud Investigation and the Kings County District Attorney's Office. These agencies have continually worked jointly with our Agents to combat fraud committed against the Social Security Administration and the City of New York."

The investigation began after BFI discovered irregularities in FERMAINT's City job application for an administrative assistant position, for which she was never hired.

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According to the indictment, between July 2001 and July 2009, FERMAINT stole more than \$50,000 in Section 8 subsidies from HPD; between June 2000 and September 2007 FERMAINT stole more than \$3,000 in Social Security benefits and between October 2003 and July 2007 she stole more than \$3,000 from the HRA. In addition, FERMAINT is charged with submitting a document in October 2004 to HRA that concealed her spouse's income.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes; HRA Commissioner Robert Doar; Special Agent in Charge of SSA/OIG Edward J. Ryan; and HPD Commissioner Rafael E. Cestero, and members of their staffs, for their assistance in this investigation.

The matter was jointly investigated by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for HPD, including Confidential Investigator Hamid Beltre and Assistant Inspector General Ondie Frederick, under the supervision of HPD Inspector General Peter L. Zanolin; HRA's Bureau of Fraud Investigation; and SSA/OIG, including Special Agent Scott McDermott, supervised by Assistant Special Agent in Charge John F. Grasso.

Assistant District Attorney Frank Dudis of the Kings County District Attorney's office has been assigned to the prosecution of the case.

An indictment is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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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