



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

ROSE GILL HEARN
COMMISSIONER

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BROOKLYN RESIDENT BUSTED IN \$19,000 HOUSING FRAUD

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), announced today the arrest of a New York City Housing Authority ("NYCHA") resident for unlawfully obtaining \$19,137 in rent subsidies.

MICHELLE BYRNES-ALVAREZ has been charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree. If convicted, BYRNES-ALVAREZ faces up to seven years in prison.

MICHELLE BYRNES-ALVAREZ, 36, tenant of record since 1990 in a 5-room apartment in NYCHA's Sheepshead/Nostrand Houses in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, allegedly filed false Affidavits of Income with NYCHA from 1998 through 2003. The investigation revealed that BYRNES-ALVAREZ failed to report the Social Security income she received for her two children, which ranged from \$19 to \$575 a month. Instead, between March 1, 1998 and June 30, 2003, BYRNES-ALVAREZ variously reported Supplemental Security Income, public assistance, and employment at Pathmark, as her sources of income. Based on the reported income, her rent was calculated at a rate of \$95 to \$356 a month. Meanwhile, had she accurately reported the Social Security benefits she received on behalf of her children, she would have paid \$619 a month, the maximum rent for an apartment that size.

These arrests are part of an ongoing City-wide crackdown by DOI and New York area prosecutors that have resulted since 1995 in the arrest of 341 residents, including 109 City, State, and Federal employees, who were charged with stealing more than \$6.6 million in rent and welfare subsidies by hiding their income and assets from the City. So far, 248 cases have resulted in convictions and over \$3.4 million in restitution. Since January 2004 alone, 46 individuals have been arrested for illegally receiving over \$700,000 in government housing benefits.

This investigation was conducted by DOI Assistant Commissioner and NYCHA Inspector General Steven A. Pasichow and members of his staff, including Assistant Inspector General James Hylton. Commissioner Gill Hearn also thanked NYCHA's Brooklyn Borough Management Department for its assistance in the investigation.

The case is being prosecuted by the Kings County District Attorney's Office.

Criminal complaints are merely an accusation. Defendants are 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.

Get the worms out of the Big Apple.
To report someone ripping off the city, call 311 or DOI directly at (212) 825-5959.

DEFENDANT INFORMATION:

1) Michelle Byrnes-Alvarez, 2975 Avenue W, Apt. 3A, Brooklyn, NY (\$19,137 in subsidies)