



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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FORMER NEW YORK CITY TEACHER ARRESTED FOR HOUSING FRAUD

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), announced today that a former New York City Department of Education ("DOE") teacher has been charged with stealing more than \$18,000 in government rent subsidies.

JOHNNIE M. HOUSER, 60, of the Bronx, has been charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree. If convicted, Houser faces a maximum of 7 years in jail.

MS. HOUSER, who lives in a five-room apartment at NYCHA's Betances Houses in the Mott Haven section of the Bronx, obtained \$18,118 in rent subsidies between November 1, 1996 and September 30, 2000 when she allegedly failed to report her DOE income, which ranged from \$21,608 and \$35,483 annually. During this period HOUSER allegedly only reported to NYCHA pension benefits from her previous employment as a nursing assistant, which ranged from \$8,514 to \$9,492 annually. As a result, HOUSER's rent ranged from \$213 to \$237 when she should have been paying \$619 a month, the maximum for an apartment that size. HOUSER retired from DOE in October 2001. She had been a special education teacher.

This arrest is part of an ongoing Citywide crackdown by DOI and the local District Attorneys and United States Attorneys, which, since 1995, has resulted in the arrest of 296 residents--including 98 City, State and Federal employees--charged with stealing nearly \$6 million in rent and welfare subsidies by hiding their income and assets from the City.

Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "This defendant has learned that the City will not be deceived into providing apartments to those who do not qualify for scarce subsidized housing. DOI will continue to investigate housing fraud so that tax payers' money is not wasted and so that those who need and qualify for affordable public housing will receive it."

Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn also thanked NYCHA's Bronx Borough Management's Office for its cooperation and assistance in the case.

The investigation was conducted by DOI Assistant Commissioner and NYCHA Inspector General Steven A. Pasichow and members of his staff, including Deputy Inspectors General James Ernst, Assistant Inspectors General James Hylton, Confidential Investigator Emily Bizzarro, Special Investigator Christopher France and Deputy Counsel to the Inspector General Karen Cohen. The Office of the Bronx District Attorney Robert T. Johnson is handling the case. Assistant District Attorney Bert Oberlander will prosecute.

Criminal complaints are merely an accusation. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

One of the law-enforcement agencies in the country, DOI 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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To make complaints about someone ripping off the city, call 311 or DOI directly at (212) 825-5959.***

