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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Brooklyn Construction Company Pleads Guilty to Failing to Pay Employees  
More Than \$303,000 in Owed Wages**

*Twenty-One Workers Receive Back Pay from The Urban Group*

Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez, together with New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Mark G. Peters, today announced that a Brooklyn construction company that was awarded contracts to perform work on schools in Brooklyn and the Bronx has pleaded guilty to grand larceny for underpaying employees and stealing the difference. The defendant made full restitution to the workers, who were presented with checks today by DA Gonzalez and Commissioner Peters.

District Attorney Gonzalez said, “This company got lucrative city contracts and then shamelessly stole money from its workers. In Brooklyn, we simply will not allow workers to have their hard-earned wages stolen from them. We are committed to protecting the integrity of city contracts and ensuring that prevailing wages are paid.”

Commissioner Peters said, “This story of greed and deception has a happy ending today, with workers finally receiving their rightful prevailing wages for the hard work they performed on this company’s public construction projects. As a result of its crimes, The Urban Group, Ltd. will also lose out on funds: by way of a five-year debarment from any public work contracts or sub-contracts in New York State. DOI is proud to stand with the Brooklyn District Attorney to make these workers whole and together we will continue to pursue construction companies who fail to pay employees their rightful, lawful wages

The District Attorney identified the defendant as The Urban Group, located at 18 Crescent Street, in East New York. The corporation pleaded guilty on Wednesday, June 13, 2018, before Brooklyn Supreme Court Justice Danny Chun, to one count of second-degree grand larceny. The corporation made full restitution of \$303,410.97 and was sentenced to a conditional discharge. The company will be debarred from city contracts for five years.

The District Attorney said that, according to the investigation, between 2014 and 2015, Urban’s owner, Gewan “Ken” Bharatlall, had six non-union workers perform construction-related tasks such as demolition, masonry, carpentry, painting and caulking. The workers

performed the construction at five School Construction Authority sites, including: Public School 101, 2360 Benson Avenue, Brooklyn; Public School 251K, 1037 East 54<sup>th</sup> Street, Brooklyn; George W. Wingate High School, 600 Kingston Avenue, Brooklyn; Public School 396X, 1930 Andrews Avenue South, Bronx; and Public School 97X, 1375 Mace Avenue, Bronx.

Labor Law and the NYC SCA contracts required the defendant to pay prevailing wages and overtime pay to all employees who worked on the projects. The defendant's owner, Gewan Bharatlall, falsely certified that the defendant had paid the employees the required prevailing wages and overtime. In reality, the defendant paid the six employees between \$10 and \$17 per hour without overtime compensation or benefits, instead of the mason tender rate of \$62 to \$63 per hour. The total underpayment of wages and benefits to the six non-union workers on SCA projects amounted to \$232,092.98.

Additionally, the defendant hired 15 non-union day laborers in 2015 to perform construction-related work at various SCA job sites, two of the sites were public schools in Brooklyn and one of the sites was a public school in the Bronx. Although the workers were performing construction-related tasks at the schools, they were only paid the standard rate of \$31 to \$38 per hour instead of the trade rate of \$64 to \$72 per hour. A calculation of the difference in pay amounted to an underpayment of \$71,317.99 in wages and benefits due to those 15 workers.

The case was investigated by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for the School Construction Authority, specifically Investigators Leonard Reins and Jose Romero and Deputy Counsel Jason S. Herman, under the supervision of Supervising Investigator Nicholas Scicutella, First Deputy Inspector General Gerald McEnroe, Inspector General Felice Sontupe, Associate Commissioner James Flaherty, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Susan Lambiase and First Deputy Commissioner Lesley Brovner.

The case was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Vivian Young Joo, of the District Attorney's Frauds Bureau, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Christopher Blank, Chief of the Organized Crime and Racketeering Unit, and the overall supervision of Assistant District Attorney Patricia McNeill, Deputy Chief of the District Attorney's Investigations Division.

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