



U.S. Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 25, 2019

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PRESS RELEASE

**FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL UNITED TALMUDIC ACADEMY
SENTENCED TO 24 MONTHS IN PRISON FOR SCHOOL MEALS FRAUD SCHEME**

Earlier today, at the federal courthouse in Brooklyn, United States District Judge Nicholas G. Garaufis sentenced the defendant Elozer Porges to 24 months' imprisonment and 1,000 hours of community service for his leadership role in a multi-million dollar fraud scheme. The Court also ordered Porges to pay more than \$3.2 million in restitution to the United States Department of Agriculture and a \$150,000 fine. Porges committed this fraud while serving as the Executive Director of the Central United Talmudic Academy (Central UTA), located in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

Richard P. Donoghue, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, William F. Sweeney, Jr., Assistant Director-in-Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI), Margaret Garnett, Commissioner, New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), and Bethanne M. Dinkins, Special Agent-in-Charge, United States Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General (USDA-OIG), announced the sentence.

"Porges now stands convicted and sentenced as a felon for abusing his position to defraud government programs and steal millions of dollars in taxpayer funds designated to feed needy children," stated United States Attorney Donoghue. "Such criminal conduct will not go unpunished."

"The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) was created to provide food and nutrition to those who truly need this assistance. Those who are involved in fraud and abuse of USDA feeding programs will be investigated by our office to the fullest extent," stated USDA-OIG Special Agent-in-Charge Dinkins. "Our joint investigation with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the New York City Department of Investigation is identifying those who sought to profit from the CACFP through illegal schemes. The USDA Office of Inspector General will continue to dedicate investigative resources, working with our law enforcement and prosecutorial partners, in order to protect the integrity of these programs and bring to justice those who commit fraud."

“School children throughout New York City rely on funding from government programs for their meals every day,” stated DOI Commissioner Garnett. “This defendant aimed to defraud those vital programs, inflating the number of meals he claimed to need for low-income students, and receiving millions of dollars in subsidies to which Central UTA was not entitled. Today's prison sentence demonstrates the enduring commitment of DOI and the U.S. Attorney's Office to protecting taxpayer dollars and ensuring those funds go to children in need.”

Between October 2013 and December 2015, Porges and his co-defendant, Joel Lowy, submitted false and misleading monthly claim forms to the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) for reimbursement from the federal government for thousands of meals purportedly served to students attending Central UTA schools at three locations. The claims were submitted pursuant to the CACFP, a program operating under the authority of the United States Department of Agriculture that provides funding to qualifying institutions. The fraudulent forms resulted in NYSDOH reimbursing Central UTA more than \$3 million for meals that had not been served to students. Instead, the funds were largely spent on non-qualifying evening events attended by adults at a Central UTA facility on Wythe Street.

Lowy pleaded guilty in March 2018 and is awaiting sentencing.

The government's case is being handled by the Office's Public Integrity Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Erik Paulsen and Maria Cruz Melendez are in charge of the prosecution.

The Defendant:

ELOZER PORGES

Age: 46

New York, NY

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 17-CR-431 (NGG)