



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE WELFARE INSPECTOR GENERAL

Catherine Leahy Scott – Acting Welfare Inspector General

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Contact: Bill Reynolds (OWIG) 518-474-1010

Melvin Hernandez (BRONX DA) 718-590-2234

INSPECTOR GENERAL: HUDSON VALLEY WOMAN CHARGED WITH STEALING MORE THAN \$29,000 IN MEDICAID BENEFITS

*Filed Fraudulent Welfare Application, Failing to Disclose Assets
Including Income Producing Property*

Acting New York State Welfare Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott and Bronx County District Attorney Robert Johnson have announced the indictment of a Mahopac woman, who has been charged with defrauding the state of more than \$29,000 in Medicaid benefits after fraudulently failing to indicate the purchase and ownership of income producing rental property valued at over two million dollars and a bank account containing \$270,000.

Elizabeth Makaj, age 44, of Mahopac was charged with eight felony counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, and eight misdemeanor counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the Second Degree. She faces a maximum of 1-1/3 to four years in prison for each felony count if convicted.

“My investigators found that the Defendant stole from a program designed to help those who need affordable health insurance,” said Inspector General Scott. “Eligible recipients of these benefits must meet certain income criteria in an application process that requires an honest disclosure of income and assets. Here, the Defendant falsified information on her application in order to fraudulently obtain benefits to which she was not entitled. My office will work closely with District Attorney Johnson to be sure justice is done, as we continue to root out welfare fraud across New York State.”

Bronx District Attorney Robert T. Johnson said: “Because of budgetary constraints far too many citizens of our state go without their basic needs being met. Therefore it’s imperative that those who illegally obtain state dollars be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. We congratulate Inspector General Scott and her staff on their diligence in protecting the public first.”

Inspector General Scott’s investigators found that between 2005 and 2009, Makaj applied for benefits through the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) without disclosing she was gainfully employed, and without disclosing accounts and assets worth millions. While receiving benefits, Makaj failed to disclose, as required, her 2006 purchase of a \$2.05 million rental property. Additionally, she failed to disclose a bank account containing \$270,000. Finally,

Makaj falsely indicated she was a Bronx resident, when in fact she was living in Mahopac. As a result of these alleged false filings, Makaj improperly obtained \$29,310 in benefits.

Makaj was arraigned before the Hon. Martin Marcus of New York State Supreme Court. Makaj is scheduled to return to court on November 21, 2013.

Inspector General Scott thanked HRA Commissioner Robert Doar and HRA's Bureau of Fraud Investigations for their assistance throughout the Inspector General's investigation. Inspector General Scott also thanked District Attorney Johnson and his staff for prosecuting this case. The Defendant is deemed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.

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