



# NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE WELFARE INSPECTOR GENERAL

**Catherine Leahy Scott – Acting Welfare Inspector General**

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## **INSPECTOR GENERAL AND QUEENS DISTRICT ATTORNEY ANNOUNCE ARREST OF QUEENS WOMAN ON CHARGES SHE STOLE NEARLY \$26,000 IN PUBLIC ASSISTANCE**

New York State Acting Welfare Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott and Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced the arrest of a Queens woman who has been charged with defrauding the state of more than \$23,000 in Medicaid and Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits after fraudulently failing to report her income and that of her live-in partner. She is also charged with stealing \$2,430 in Unemployment Insurance benefits in a related investigation.

Tomeshrie Lomchand, age 31, of Queens, was arraigned in Queens Criminal Court on charges of Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, Welfare Fraud in the Third Degree, Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree. If convicted, she faces up to seven years in prison.

“The defendant is charged with unlawfully taking money from programs meant to assist those in need to meet their expenses, feed their families, heat their homes or obtain medical care,” said Inspector General Scott. “My investigation revealed the defendant received these funds after failing to truthfully disclose her household income, which resulted in these criminal charges. As part of our ongoing effort to investigate theft of public assistance programs and ensure the programs are properly implemented so that funds are provided only to those who need it, my office will work diligently with District Attorney Brown to ensure those who steal from important support programs in Queens are held accountable and brought to justice.”

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown said: “The defendant is accused of using deceit and fraud to feign a need for medical and food benefits, and with diverting unemployment benefits that she was not entitled to receive herself. In today’s tough economic climate, such benefits are a vital lifeline for many New Yorkers. Those who falsely apply for and receive those benefits cheat those who are truly in need. The defendant will now be held accountable for allegedly ripping off the system for tens of thousands of dollars. I thank Inspector General Scott for bringing this case to our attention and for her office’s work in uncovering the defendant’s alleged scheme.”

Medicaid is available to income qualifying New Yorkers who are unable to pay for medical care. SNAP is a federally-funded program which provides benefits to help low-income New Yorkers –

working people, seniors, the disabled, and others – to feed their families. SNAP eligibility and benefit levels are based on household size, income, expenses, and other factors. The Unemployment Insurance Program (UIP) provides compensation to workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own.

It is alleged that from December 1, 2009, to April 30, 2011, Lomchand submitted false benefit applications to the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) to obtain the Medicaid and SNAP benefits. In these submissions, Lomchand allegedly failed to disclose that both she and her live-in partner earned a household income. Lomchand admitted to the Inspector General that she had not been truthful on her application for welfare benefits. As a result of these alleged false filings, Lomchand improperly obtained \$20,668 from Medicaid and \$2,600 from SNAP.

In a related investigation, Lomchand was also charged with stealing \$2,430 in unemployment insurance benefits lawfully claimed by her ex-boyfriend. Specifically, Lomchand allegedly redirected the benefits away from the ex-boyfriend's bank account and into bank accounts belonging to her and a relative. Lomchand was charged in a second criminal complaint with Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree and Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree. If convicted, she faces up to four years in prison.

Altogether, Lomchand is charged with fraudulently acquiring \$25,698 in benefits.

Lomchand was arraigned before Queens Criminal Court Judge Gene Lopez. She was released on her own recognizance and her next court date is January 14, 2014.

Inspector General Scott thanked HRA Commissioner Robert Doar and HRA's Bureau of Fraud Investigations, Department of Labor Commissioner Peter M. Rivera and his investigative staff for their assistance with the Inspector General's investigation. Inspector General Scott also thanked Queens District Attorney Brown 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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