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**BRONX DISTRICT ATTORNEY DARCEL D. CLARK ANNOUNCES
BRONX WOMAN INDICTED IN RENT SCAM THAT NETTED HER NEARLY \$20,000
Defendant Allegedly Preyed on Hardworking People Desperate for Housing**

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark today announced that a Bronx woman has been indicted for stealing almost \$20,000 from eight people in a scheme promising affordable apartments in city-owned buildings.

District Attorney Clark said, "The defendant preyed on people who entrusted her with their hard-earned money as rent and security deposits for apartments. She allegedly posed as a real estate broker or an employee of the city's Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) or the city's Housing Development Corporation (HDC) and took amounts from \$1,620 to \$3,240 for deposits, which are enormous sums for people with low incomes. Her alleged behavior is unconscionable."

New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Margaret Garnett said, "Affordable housing is a fundamental need — but, as charged in the indictment, this defendant used it as part of a scam that victimized unsuspecting tenants twice, first, by stealing their cash and, second, by leaving them without housing. The illegal conduct charged in this indictment is despicable, particularly during a time when New Yorkers are in such dire need of affordable housing. DOI thanks the Bronx District Attorney's Office, the NYPD, City Housing Development Corporation, City Department of Housing Preservation & Development, and the New York City Housing Authority for their partnership in stopping these crimes and holding this defendant accountable."

District Attorney Clark said the defendant, Jennifer Ricardo, 39, of Decatur Avenue, the Bronx, was arraigned today before Bronx Supreme Court Justice Efrain Alvarado on a 39-count indictment charging third-degree Grand Larceny, fourth-degree Grand Larceny, Petit Larceny, third-degree Criminal Possession of Stolen Property, fourth-degree Criminal Possession of Stolen Property, fifth-degree Criminal Possession of Stolen Property, first-degree Scheme to Defraud, second-degree Scheme to Defraud, second-degree Criminal Impersonation, second degree Criminal



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Possession of a Forged Instrument and third-degree Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument. She is due back in court on October 8, 2021.

According to the investigation, between June 2019 and September 2020, Ricardo allegedly pretended to be either a real estate broker, an HPD employee, or an HDC employee, and met with her victims at various apartment buildings in the Bronx, accepting rent payments and security deposits for apartments in the buildings. The would-be renters never received keys or got the apartments and could not get in contact with Ricardo after they paid her. She allegedly scammed eight people out of a total of \$19,459.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Sarah Zuckerman of the Economic Crimes Bureau, under the supervision of Richard Kearney, Deputy Chief of Economic Crimes Bureau, and William Zelenka, Chief of the Economic Crimes Bureau, under the overall supervision of Tarek Rahman, Deputy Chief of the Investigations Division and Wanda Perez-Maldonado, Chief of the Investigations Division.

District Attorney Clark thanked Assistant District Attorney Mariah Genis, Assistant District Attorney Ethan Binder and Trial Preparation Assistant Ayisola Johnson, all of the Economic Crimes Bureau, and BXDA Principal Accountant Investigator Julio Santiago, BXDA Principal Accountant Investigator James Antonino, and BXDA Senior Rackets Investigator Brendan Sullivan, for their assistance in the investigation.

District Attorney Clark thanked Police Officer John Istorico of the NYPD Bronx Grand Larceny Squad, DOI Senior Inspector General Jessica Heegan and DOI Special Investigator / Forensic Auditor Lana Wong for their assistance in the investigation. District Attorney Clark also thanked New York City Housing Preservation and Development and New York City Housing Development Corporation for their assistance.

An indictment is an accusatory instrument and not proof of a defendant's guilt.

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