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59-2025

For Immediate Release

July 17, 2025

HRA EMPLOYEE, BRONX LANDLORD INDICTED FOR THEFT OF \$110,000 FROM CITY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark and New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber today announced that the director of the Human Resources Administration's rental assistance program and a Bronx landlord were indicted for stealing \$110,000 from the city in a fraud scheme.

District Attorney Clark said, "The defendants are accused of stealing from a program funded to prevent homelessness. They allegedly used their positions to take taxpayers' dollars away from the needy."

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, "The City's rental assistance program provides crucial rent support for New Yorkers at risk of losing their homes. The defendants, a supervisor at HRA and a landlord, worked together to defraud this critical program, manipulating an HRA database to steal over \$100,000 in public funds. I thank HRA for reporting allegations to DOI that led to this investigation, and the Bronx District Attorney's Office for its partnership to protect taxpayer dollars from fraud."

District Attorney Clark said the defendants, Desiree Royer, 58 of Montgomery Street, Brooklyn and Raul Thomas, 49 of Hunt Avenue, the Bronx, were arrested today and were arraigned by Bronx Supreme Court Justice Darlene Goldberg on first-degree Corrupting the Government, second-degree Grand Larceny, Public Corruption, second-degree Criminal Possession of Stolen Property, 38 counts of first-degree Falsifying Business Records, 38 counts of first-degree Offering a False Instrument for Filing and Official Misconduct. They were released on their own recognizance. Their next court date is October 22, 2025.

According to the investigation by DOI and the Bronx DA's Public Integrity Bureau, from December 2020 to October 2022, Desiree Royer, Director of the Renewal and Rental Assistance Program, Homelessness Prevention Administration, under the Human Resources Administration, and her co-defendant, Raul Thomas, a contracted landlord with the program, stole over \$110,000.



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According to the investigation, Royer issued 25 duplicate checks to Thomas for tenants who resided within his Bronx buildings, and 15 checks to Thomas for residents who never resided in any of Thomas' buildings. In total, \$110,000 was cashed by Thomas from the 40 checks. An analysis of Royer's bank records determined that she deposited \$60,000 into her account during the time of this scheme.

In 2022, the Department of Social Services (DSS) conducted a routine audit of its systems, which included the Housing Assistance Payment System (HAPS). During this audit they discovered inconsistencies in the issuance of numerous payments to Thomas.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Teri Chung of the Public Integrity Bureau, under the supervision of Cassie Perez, Supervisor of the Public Integrity Bureau, Sarah Clements, Deputy Chief of the Public Integrity Bureau, Jon Veiga, Chief of the Public Integrity Bureau, and under the overall supervision of Denise Kodjo, Deputy Chief of the Investigations Division and Wanda Perez-Maldonado, Chief of the Investigations Division.

District Attorney Clark thanked Senior Investigative Assistant District Attorney Christopher Shaw of the Financial Frauds Bureau and Principal Accountant Investigator James Antonino of the Investigations Division, Trial Preparation Assistant Ivan Reyes of the Public Integrity Bureau and NYPD Detective Daniel Angen of the Bronx DA Squad for their assistance on the case.

District Attorney Clark thanked Special Investigator Daniel Malvey, Assistant Inspector General Alexandra Davie from the Department of Investigation for their work in the investigation.

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