



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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DOI INVESTIGATION LEADS TO ARREST OF SECTION 8 RECIPIENT ON CHARGES OF FAILING TO LIVE IN HER SUBSIDIZED BRONX APARTMENT AND ILLEGALLY SUBLETTING AND PROFITING FROM IT

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), announced the arrest on Thursday, March 27, 2025, of a Florida woman on charges of illegally obtaining more than \$50,000 in Section 8 benefits for a Bronx apartment where she did not reside and failing to report to the New York City Housing Authority (“NYCHA”), which administers Section 8 benefits, that she sublet her subsidized apartment, receiving rental income from tenants, between November 2019 and August 2024. The Office of Bronx County District Attorney Darcel Clark is prosecuting the case.

AUSTRALIA GONZALEZ, 65, of Hialeah, FL, was charged yesterday, Thursday, March 27, 2025, with Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, a class C felony; Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, a class D felony; Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree and Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, class E felonies; and Petit Larceny and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the Second Degree, class A misdemeanors. Upon conviction, a class C felony is punishable by up to 15 years in prison, a class D felony by up to seven years in prison, a class E felony by up to four years in prison, and a class A misdemeanor by up to one year’s incarceration. GONZALEZ was arraigned and released on her own recognizance. Her next court date is scheduled for May 7, 2025, in Bronx Criminal Court.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, “This defendant, a Section 8 recipient, obtained tens of thousands of dollars in rental subsidies to which she was not entitled, by omitting and misrepresenting to NYCHA key facts about her residency and household income, according to the charges. Section 8 benefits are critical public resources and I thank the Bronx District Attorney’s Office for their partnership and commitment to protect these resources and hold accountable those who seek to obtain them by fraud.”

Recipients of Section 8 benefits must maintain their Section-8 subsidized apartment as their primary residence and are required to submit Affidavits of Income to NYCHA representing who and how many people reside in the apartment and the total household income. The amount of monthly subsidies paid to landlords each month is based, in part, on a recipient’s representation to NYCHA as to the composition of their household, employment and income.

According to the criminal complaint, GONZALEZ resided in the state of Florida from November 2019 to August 2024 and failed to report this residency on the Affidavits of Income she submitted to NYCHA. The investigation found that during this time the defendant sublet her apartment -- from 2019 to 2023 -- to two tenants. One tenant rented a bedroom from April 2022 until November 2023 and paid the defendant monthly rent of between \$750 and \$800; and a second tenant rented a bedroom from November 2019 until November 2023, paying the defendant monthly rent of \$800. The defendant’s Affidavits of Income did not report those tenants or income, stating that between 2019 and 2024, the defendant’s monthly household

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income was \$771 in 2019, no income in 2020, \$513 in 2021 and \$24 in 2024. The defendant also stated on these affidavits that she was unemployed. As a result of this conduct, NYCHA overpaid rental subsidies on GONZALEZ's behalf in the amount of more than \$50,000.

DOI Commissioner Strauber thanked the Bronx County District Attorney Darcel Clark and her staff for their partnership on this investigation. Assistant District Attorney Kaseim Tripp of the District Attorney's Financial Frauds Bureau is handling the prosecution. Commissioner Strauber also thanked NYCHA Chief Executive Officer Lisa Bova-Hiatt and her staff for their cooperation on this investigation.

The investigation was conducted by Chief Investigator Patricia Sedacca with DOI's Office of the Inspector General for NYCHA under the supervision of Assistant Inspector General Enio Bencosme, Assistant Inspector General Robert Joyce, Deputy Inspector General Gregory Deboer, Executive Agency Counsel Laureen Hintz, Inspector General Ralph Iannuzzi, Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Initiatives Christopher Ryan, and Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella.

A criminal complaint is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country and New York City's corruption watchdog. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City. DOI's strategy attacks corruption comprehensively through systemic investigations that lead to high-impact arrests, preventive internal controls and operational reforms that improve the way the City runs.

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