

Charles J. Hynes
District Attorney



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KINGS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY CHARLES J. HYNES AND NYC HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION COMMISSIONER ROBERT DOAR ANNOUNCE INDICTMENT OF ATTORNEY WHO WAS COLLECTING MEDICAID, FOOD STAMPS AND UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS

DEFENDANT APPLIED FOR BENEFITS BY FALSIFYING APPLICATIONS, MISREPRESENTING HER INCOME

Brooklyn, March 20, 2013 – Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes and NYC Human Resources Administration Commissioner Robert Doar today announced the indictment of Lesley Ann Lawson, 37, for collecting Medicaid, food stamps, and unemployment insurance benefits, while working as a contract attorney. She is indicted on charges including Welfare Fraud in the Third Degree, Welfare Fraud in the Fourth Degree, Welfare Fraud in the Fifth Degree, Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree, Falsifying Business Records in the Second Degree, Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, and False Statements or Representations. She could face up to seven years in prison.

“It is important to make sure that those who need help are able to receive government benefits to help them survive. Thousands of individuals in NYC rely on assistance such as Welfare, Rental Assistance, Cash Assistance, Unemployment Benefits, Medicaid and Food Stamps. To these individuals, it is the difference between having a place to live, having food on their tables, and having clothes on their backs,” said District Attorney Hynes. “Unfortunately, there are scammers who try to take advantage of the government and steal funds for which they are ineligible. In essence, they are stealing money from those who are less fortunate and they are costing the taxpayers more of their hard earned money. By indicting and prosecuting these offenders, we are sending a message that this fraudulent activity will not be tolerated,” he said.

"Monitoring Medicaid fraud and abuse is a key responsibility for HRA," said HRA Commissioner Robert Doar. "Our staff works diligently to identify and stop those who take precious resources from New Yorkers in need. Since the charges also raised questions about Ms. Lawson's honesty and trustworthiness as an attorney, we are referring this matter to the New York State Supreme Court Appellate Division's Second Judicial Department. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the Kings County District Attorney's Office to bring unscrupulous individuals to justice."

Lawson was admitted to practice law in NY in 2005. Starting in 2010, Lawson worked for Hudson Legal, a company that contracts attorneys to big law firms for discovery assistance. From 2010 to 2012, she earned almost \$200,000 in salary. She paid for vision and dental benefits through her company. However, she chose to get her medical benefits through Medicaid by allegedly misrepresenting her income. The indictment charges that from June 2010 to March 2012, she applied for and received over \$15,000 in Medicaid for her, her husband and their child. According to the indictment, she falsified Medicaid applications, reporting that her only source of income was unemployment benefits.

From March 2010 to February 2011, Lawson also received over \$2,000 in food stamp benefits for her, her husband, and their child. Once again, according to the indictment, she submitted an application, falsely reporting that she was receiving unemployment benefits and she had no other source of income.

Lawson had also been receiving unemployment insurance benefits in 2008 and 2009 when she was living in Ronkonkoma, NY, and continued to receive those benefits when she moved to Brooklyn in 2010. She received over \$5,000 in unemployment benefits, when she was living in Brooklyn, from March 2010 to October 2010, allegedly claiming that she was unemployed. To receive the unemployment benefits, she had to fill out an application, reporting that she was not working, when in fact, she was employed, and she had to call the unemployment office every week to recertify.

Lawson was indicted on February 26, and surrendered today to the Kings County District Attorney's Office.

The case was investigated by Investigators Lori Cruz from the Human Resources Administration and Alan Moy from the New York State Department of Labor.

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

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Debra Jaroslawicz from the Healthcare Fraud Bureau. Lauren Mack is Chief of the Healthcare Fraud Bureau.

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