



# NEWS RELEASE

Office of the New York State Welfare Inspector General  
**Catherine Leahy Scott – Acting Welfare Inspector General**

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## **ROCHESTER BUSINESS OWNER CHARGED WITH FOOD STAMP FRAUD**

*Arrest Is Part Of Investigation That Uncovered Nearly \$25,000 In Illegal Food Stamp Trafficking At Three Rochester Stores*

ROCHESTER - New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott today announced the arrest and arraignment of a Rochester business owner on a charge that he illegally exchanged Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (“SNAP” or more commonly known as food stamps) benefits for cash, engaging in nearly \$5,000 worth of fraudulent transactions between January 2013 and May 2015. His arrest stems from a year-long joint investigation conducted by local, state and federal authorities that resulted in the July arrests of two other business owners accused of illegally trafficking in more than \$20,000 worth of food stamps.

Arrested and arraigned today was Aimal Sultan, 41, of Penfield, owner and operator of S and M Mini Mart at 439 South Avenue. He was charged with Misuse of Food Stamps, a Class E Felony.

“This defendant’s business was entrusted to handle food stamp transactions for those in need but instead he allegedly violated that trust and took advantage of the public benefits system as well as the families it was meant to serve,” said Inspector General Leahy Scott. “I will continue to aggressively pursue and hold accountable anyone who attempts to defraud the public benefits system and the people it serves.”

Sultan, accused of engaging in \$4,895.22 worth of fraudulent food stamp transactions at his store during the two-year period, was charged as part of an investigation that led the July arrests of Nabil Saeed, 58, owner of Discount Food Market on Avenue D, and Kamalaldain Ahmed, 55, of Rochester, the owner and operator of Hudson Best Mini Mart on Hudson Avenue. Saeed was accused of \$16,596.80 in fraudulent transactions and Ahned was accused of engaging in \$3,465.53 worth of fraudulent transactions.

Inspector General Leahy Scott’s investigation revealed that the store owners engaged in a food stamp trafficking scheme, predominantly one in which store owners provided discounted cash payments to customers in exchange for the full value of their SNAP benefits. Typically, the store owners would provide cash payments of 50% to 70% of the available SNAP benefits to the customer. In turn, the store owner would submit the entire amount of the customer’s SNAP benefit to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for reimbursement, falsely indicating that the customer had purchased food at full value. In a separate scheme, the

store owners allowed customers to purchase items not authorized under SNAP guidelines, such as cigarettes, prepared food, and clothing. The SNAP program is licensed and funded by the USDA, managed in New York by the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), and administered locally by the various social services districts around the State. The benefits are intended to provide food for low income residents including working people, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and others. SNAP eligibility and benefit levels are based on household size, income, and other factors. SNAP benefits can be accessed at registered retail stores throughout New York State using an Electronic Benefit Transfer card. Stores authorized to accept SNAP benefits are licensed by the USDA.

Sultan was arraigned in Rochester City Court in front of Judge Melchor Castro. Cases against Saeed and Ahmed, each facing the same felony charge as Sultan, are pending in court.

Inspector General Leahy Scott thanked the USDA's Office of Inspector General, Rochester Police Department, Monroe County Department of Human Services, and the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance for their cooperation in this investigation. The Monroe County District Attorney's Office is handling the prosecution of these defendants.

The defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty in a court of law.

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