



# NEWS RELEASE

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

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## NIAGARA COUNTY WOMAN CHARGED WITH WELFARE FRAUD

### *Defendant Fraudulently Received over \$2,000 in Food Stamps*

BUFFALO - New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott today announced the arrest and arraignment of a Niagara County woman on charges she fraudulently received food stamps.

Christine Willett, 45, of Main Street, North Tonawanda, was arraigned in Lockport City Court today on charges of Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, Welfare Fraud in the Fourth Degree, and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, all felonies. She pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The investigation by Inspector General Leahy Scott found that from November 1, 2015, to April 30, 2016, Willett fraudulently received over \$2,000 in food stamps as a result of her failure to accurately report her income. In her November 2015, "Periodic Report" to Niagara County Department of Social Services, Willett failed to report income from her job as a home health aide.

"This defendant received public benefits to which she was not entitled by deceiving county Social Services and defrauding a system meant for New Yorkers most in need of financial assistance," said Inspector General Leahy Scott. "I will use my office to pursue anyone who defrauds the public benefits system for their own criminal enrichment."

Willett was arraigned today in Lockport City Court and released pending her reappearance in court Oct. 24.

Inspector General Leahy Scott thanked the Niagara County Department of Social Services for their assistance with the investigation, the Niagara County Sheriff's Office for their assistance with the arrest, and the Niagara County District Attorney's Office for prosecuting this matter.

The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.

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*The New York State Office of the Welfare Inspector General investigates fraud, abuse or illegal acts committed against public assistance programs designed to help those in need. Our office also investigates complaints about the agencies and local social services districts who administer social services programs. Complaints and referrals are kept confidential. We can be reached by calling toll free: 1-800-367-4448, utilizing our online complaint form: <http://www.ig.state.ny.gov> or sending an email to: [inspector.general@ig.ny.gov](mailto:inspector.general@ig.ny.gov). You also can write to our office at: Office of the Welfare Inspector General, Empire State Plaza, Agency Building 2, 16th Floor Albany, New York 12223.*