



# NEWS RELEASE

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

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## **CASINO EMPLOYEE CHARGED AS PART OF ERIE COUNTY WELFARE FRAUD SWEEP**

BUFFALO – New York State Acting Welfare Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott and Erie County District Attorney John J. Flynn today announced the arrest of an Erie County resident as part of a welfare fraud sweep on charges he stole public assistance benefits to which he was not entitled by concealing the fact he was earning income as a casino employee.

Michael Kirkwood, 54, of Buffalo, was charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, Welfare Fraud in the Third Degree and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, all felonies. The charges allege Kirkwood concealed the fact he was earning income from his job as a shift manager for the environmental services department at the Seneca Buffalo Creek Casino and through such misrepresentation received more than \$8,200 in welfare cash and food stamp benefits to which he was not entitled from September 2013 through January 2015.

Kirkwood was taken into custody Wednesday afternoon following his casino shift as the fifth defendant charged the same day as part of an ongoing initiative targeting welfare fraud in Erie County through a joint investigation by Acting Welfare Inspector General Leahy Scott, the Erie County Department of Social Services and District Attorney Flynn and his office. He was arraigned this morning in Buffalo City Court.

“These defendants brazenly concealed their income and household makeup so they could steal taxpayer-funded benefits meant only for those with the most financial need,” said **Acting Welfare Inspector General Leahy Scott**. “These arrests show an ongoing commitment by my office and my law enforcement partners to pursue anyone who abuses our vital public benefits system.”

Also charged Wednesday were:

Stephanie Jurek, 33, of West Seneca, was charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, Welfare Fraud in the Third Degree and two counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, all felonies. The charges allege Jurek concealed the fact she lived with the employed father of their three children and that through such misrepresentation was able to receive more than \$30,400 in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“food stamps”) and Medicaid benefits from July 2013 through October 2017 to which she was not entitled.

Camille Jackson, 47, of Buffalo, was charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, Welfare Fraud in the Third Degree and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, all felonies. The charges allege Jackson concealed the fact she was earning income from a job as a personal care aide and through such misrepresentation received nearly \$5,000 in welfare cash benefits to which she was not entitled from September

2012 through April 2014.

Ayreace Hover, 26, of Buffalo, was charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, Welfare Fraud in the Third Degree and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, all felonies. The charges allege Hover concealed the fact he lived with the mother of his children and that she earned an income as a hospital aide making him ineligible for nearly \$4,700 in food stamp benefits he received from October 2013 through September 2014.

Lyntira Henley, 35, of Lackawanna, was charged with 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. The charges allege that Henley concealed the fact she was employed and earning income at a fast food retail company making her ineligible for nearly \$2,200 in food stamp benefits she received from May 2017 through September 2017.

All five defendants were arraigned in the City of Buffalo Court and released on their own recognizance pending their reappearance in court at a later date.

Acting Welfare Inspector General Leahy Scott thanked the New York State Police for their assistance with the arrests, the Erie County Department of Social Services for their assistance with the investigation and District Attorney Flynn and his office for assistance with the investigation and for prosecuting these cases.

The defendants are presumed innocent until and unless 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.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*