



# NEWS RELEASE

Office of the New York State Welfare Inspector General  
Letizia Tagliaferro –Inspector General

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## FIVE ERIE COUNTY RESIDENTS ADMIT GUILT IN WELFARE FRAUD CASES

BUFFALO – New York State Inspector General Letizia Tagliaferro and Erie County District Attorney John J. Flynn today announced the guilty pleas of five Erie County residents who together stole more than \$50,000 in public benefits to which they were not entitled by concealing household incomes in their welfare applications.

Stephanie Jurek, 34, of West Seneca pleaded guilty to Welfare Fraud in the Fourth Degree, a felony. 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 \$32,000 in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“food stamps”) and Medicaid benefits from July 2013 through October 2017 to which she was not entitled.

Michael Kirkwood, 55, of Buffalo, previously pleaded guilty to Welfare Fraud in the Fifth Degree, a misdemeanor. Kirkwood was sentenced to a one-year conditional discharge and agreed to repay the full amount of the fraud. 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.

Camille Jackson, 48, of Buffalo, previously pleaded guilty to Welfare Fraud in the Fifth Degree, a misdemeanor. Jackson was sentenced to a one-year conditional discharge and agreed to repay the full amount of the fraud. 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, 27, of Buffalo, previously pleaded guilty to Welfare Fraud in the Fifth Degree, a misdemeanor. Hover was sentenced to a one-year conditional discharge and agreed to repay the full amount of the fraud. 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, previously pleaded guilty to Disorderly Conduct in full satisfaction of charges against her for concealing 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. Prior to her guilty plea, Henley had fully repaid the amount related to her fraud.

“Social welfare benefit programs are a critical resource to ensure that those in need of assistance get the proper support to sustain themselves and their families, and the integrity of these programs is paramount to meeting

those needs. The resolution of these cases sets an important example that fraudulently obtaining these critical resources will not be tolerated, and I thank the Erie County Department of Social Services and my law enforcement partners for their collaboration.”

"If you unlawfully obtain welfare or food stamp benefits, you are stealing from taxpayers and you will be prosecuted," said Erie County District Attorney John J. Flynn. "These funds are reserved for those who truly need assistance. I want to thank the Inspector General's Office for working with my office in investigating these cases. I hope that by holding these defendants accountable that we can deter others from committing these crimes."

Jurek, Kirkwood, and Jackson pleaded guilty in Erie County Court, while Henley and Hover pleaded guilty in Buffalo City Court. All were initially arrested in February as part of a welfare fraud law enforcement sweep.

Jurek is due back in Erie County Court on October 29, 2019 for sentencing.

Inspector General Tagliafierro 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.

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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*