



**LUCY LANG**  
Inspector General

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April 23, 2024

Molly Wasow Park  
Commissioner  
New York City Department of Social Services  
Human Resources Administration  
4 World Trade Center  
150 Greenwich Street, 38th Floor  
New York, New York 10007

Re: OWIG 0571-318-2022

Dear Commissioner Park:

On March 10, 2022, the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) advised the Office of the New York State Welfare Inspector General (OWIG) that [REDACTED] was wrongfully collecting another's social security benefits and may have failed to disclose her receipt of these benefits to the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) when receiving public assistance benefits. Specifically, the SSA advised that [REDACTED] has been collecting the social security benefits of her deceased grandmother, [REDACTED], since [REDACTED] 2003 death.

OWIG's investigation of this allegation found that [REDACTED] who lives at [REDACTED], Apartment [REDACTED] in the Bronx, has received a combination of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid benefits since August 2010. Per the Welfare Management System (WMS), [REDACTED] currently receives \$250 in SNAP benefits monthly. WMS also shows that [REDACTED] did not report her receipt of social security benefits to HRA in public benefits applications and recertifications.

In August 2022, [REDACTED] was interviewed by the SSA OIG, admitted to improperly receiving her grandmother's social security benefits, and signed an affidavit reflecting her admission. [REDACTED] also acknowledged her receipt of SNAP benefits and stated that she was willing to pay back monies improperly received.

Despite these admissions, however, numerous deficiencies in HRA's maintenance of records would present significant obstacles to a criminal prosecution of [REDACTED]. Most notably, applications and reapplications filed by [REDACTED] which were scanned by HRA and archived, were often missing crucial pages. For example, multiple scanned applications were missing the "penalty" page, which explains to applicants the consequences for failing to disclose accurate information such as changes to household composition and income, among other things. Some applications and reapplications were missing the "changes" page, which details and explains that

applicants are required to immediately report to HRA any changes in their household composition, income, or resources. And still other applications and reapplications were missing the signature page upon which the applicant certifies that the information provided is correct.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the welfare benefits paid to [REDACTED] were not consistent and there were multiple gaps in the potential fraud period.

Notwithstanding these evidentiary shortfalls, the findings of this investigation were referred to the Office of the Bronx County District Attorney and the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, both of whom declined prosecution. Therefore, I am referring this matter to HRA for any action deemed appropriate. I recommend that HRA review its record scanning and archiving processes to determine if the deficiencies found in this investigation are systemic and if so, remediate the same.

Please advise me of any action taken by HRA in response to this referral within 45 days of the date of this letter. If you require further information, please contact Downstate Chief of Investigations Benjamin Defibaugh at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lucy Lang".

Lucy Lang  
Inspector General

cc: Ann Marie Scalia, Esq.  
General Counsel and Chief Legal Officer

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<sup>1</sup> The following applications are missing pages: December 2016, December 2017 (Periodic Report), June 2018, December 2018, May 2019, December 2020, and December 2021. Of note, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, applications, reapplications, and Periodic Reports were not required in 2020, and benefits were automatically renewed.