



The City of New York  
Department of Investigation

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **FOUR QUEENS DAYCARE WORKERS CHARGED WITH SUBMITTING FRAUDULENT MEDICAL FORMS REQUIRED BY THE CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE**

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), announced the arrests of four employees at Bright Start Learning Center, a Queens daycare center, on charges of submitting fraudulent medical forms to their employer, which are required by the City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (“DOHMH”). Every two years employees at New York City daycares are required to submit to DOHMH a medical form, called a “Staff Health Form,” signed by a physician, which shows the employee has been examined and cleared by a physician for various illnesses and immunizations. After DOHMH notified DOI of discrepancies involving these forms, DOI worked on this investigation with the office of Queens County District Attorney Melinda Katz, which is prosecuting the cases.

SYEDA HUSSAIN, 43, of Woodside, N.Y.; AFERDITA PAVLI, 59, of Astoria, N.Y.; WASSMAH YOUSAFI, 46, of Astoria, N.Y.; and YIN YU, 53, of Syosset, N.Y. were each charged Monday, December 16, 2024, with Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree, a class E felony, and Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Third Degree, Falsifying Business Records in the Second Degree, Obstructing Governmental Administration in the Second Degree, and Misrepresentation by a Child Day Care Provider, all class A misdemeanors. Upon conviction, a class E felony is punishable by up to four years in prison and a class A misdemeanor by up to one year’s incarceration. The defendants were arraigned on Monday, December 16, 2024, and released on their own recognizance.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, “Daycare employees in New York City must be cleared by physicians for work to protect the children in their care, and we will hold accountable those who evade this requirement by filing fraudulent health forms. I thank DOHMH for the inspection and reporting to DOI that prompted this investigation and the Queens District Attorney’s Office for its commitment to ensuring City daycares are healthy spaces for children.”

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz said: “Employees at New York City’s daycare centers perform the vital role of safeguarding our children and are required to follow all applicable laws and regulations. These defendants are alleged to have skirted the law by filing falsified health forms, potentially putting children at risk. Thank you to our partners at the Department of Investigation and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene for their work on this investigation.”

According to the criminal complaints, on January 31, 2023, a DOHMH Early Childhood Education Consultant conducted an annual inspection of the Bright Start Child Learning Center located at 23-88 31st Street in Queens and observed that the doctor’s signature on the September 2022 Staff Health Form on file for defendant HUSSAIN did not match an older Staff Health Form for the same individual. When interviewed by investigators, the doctor who purportedly signed the form indicated that it was not her

signature and that she had not filled out the form. In addition, the expiration dates on the Staff Health Forms for YOUSAFI, YU and PAVLI appeared to be altered and when contacted by investigators, the medical practices in each of those instances confirmed that the defendants were not seen in their practices on the dates listed on the Staff Health Forms. HUSSAIN acknowledged to investigators that the form was forged, while YOUSAFI, YU and PAVLI asserted they had seen the doctor on the dates indicated on the forms and they had not altered the forms.

DOI Commissioner Strauber thanked Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz and her staff for the prosecution of this matter, which is being handled by Assistant District Attorney Manaal Khokhar under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Christine Oliveri, Bureau Chief of the Public Corruption Bureau. Commissioner Strauber also thanked Acting DOHMH Commissioner Dr. Michelle Morse and her staff for notifying DOI of these allegations and for their cooperation in this investigation.

At DOI, the investigation was conducted by Confidential Investigator Guylynne Joseph of DOI's Office of the Inspector General for DOHMH and was supervised by Assistant Inspector General Shakina Griffith, First Deputy Inspector General Mary Kozlow, Inspector General Thomas Kapp, Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Initiatives Christopher Ryan, and Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella.

Criminal complaints are accusations. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

*DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country and New York City's corruption watchdog. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City. DOI's strategy attacks corruption comprehensively through systemic investigations that lead to high-impact arrests, preventive internal controls and operational reforms that improve the way the City runs.*

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