



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

JOCELYN E. STRAUBER
COMMISSIONER

180 MAIDEN LANE
NEW YORK, NY 10038
212-825-5900

Release #29-2024
nyc.gov/doi

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, JUNE 18, 2024

CONTACT: DIANE STRUZZI
(212) 825-5931

**CITY HEALTH INSPECTOR REPORTS BRIBE ATTEMPT TO DOI
SUBSEQUENT INVESTIGATION RESULTS IN BRIBERY CHARGES AGAINST BROOKLYN WOMAN**

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), announced the arrest of a Brooklyn woman for allegedly offering a bribe to a City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (“DOHMH”) Associate Public Health Sanitarian (“APHS”). The APHS reported to DOI that a test taker who had failed the DOHMH Food Protection Certificate (“FPC”) exam and wanted a passing grade had offered cash to the APHS, which the APHS did not accept. DOI conducted an undercover operation, which led to these charges. The office of Manhattan District Attorney Alvin L. Bragg, Jr., is prosecuting the case.

CASELLE WHYTE, 53, of Brooklyn, N.Y. was charged Monday, June 17, 2024, with two counts of Bribery in the Third Degree, class D felonies. Upon conviction, a class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison. She was arraigned Tuesday morning and released on her own recognizance. Her next court date is scheduled for August 7, 2024.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, “This defendant used bribery to try and obtain a certificate confirming she had passed an exam about the safe handling of food, when in fact she had failed the exam, according to the criminal complaint. This kind of corruption can jeopardize the health of New Yorkers, but thankfully the Department of Health employee who was offered the alleged bribe rejected the offer and reported it to DOI, consistent with the legal obligation of all City employees to report corruption. I thank this employee and the City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene for their commitment to integrity, and the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office for their partnership in pursuing this important case.”

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin L. Bragg, Jr., said, “The integrity of the Department of Health’s Food Protection Certificate exam is a key component of the health and safety of our City’s restaurant-goers. I thank the DOI for its partnership in this case as we continue to root out fraud in Manhattan.”

Dr. Aswin Vasan, DOHMH Commissioner said, “Our staff not only protect health, but also trust, by ensuring our standards are fair. I am proud of this staff person, and the entire agency, for the work they do every day. The integrity demonstrated in this instance is reflective of how well these individuals serve our City year-round.”

The City Health Code requires that at least one supervisor at a food service establishment or a non-retail food processing establishment hold an FPC during the time the establishment is operating. To obtain an FPC requires completing a food protection course and passing a final exam.

According to the criminal complaint, in October 2023, at the NYC Health Academy in Manhattan, an APHS proctored an FPC exam. The defendant completed the exam and immediately thereafter, an APHS graded the exam and notified the defendant she had failed. The defendant approached the APHS

and tried to hand the APHS an unknown amount of money while asking the APHS, “Can you pass me?” The APHS did not accept the money and reported the incident to DOI, which subsequently conducted an undercover investigation.

In December 2023, DOI investigators listened to and recorded a call between the APHS and the defendant in which the defendant confirmed that after failing the test, she had \$50 in her hand when she approached the APHS in October 2023 and would have provided more money if the APHS had engaged with her. During a subsequent call on the same day, the defendant stated that she wanted the APHS to pass her on the exam in exchange for \$50. In February 2024, DOI investigators listened to and recorded another call between the APHS and defendant in which the APHS provided the defendant with the contact information for a “co-worker” who would assist the defendant in passing the exam in exchange for money. The “co-worker” in fact was a DOI undercover investigator posing as a DOHMH employee. In May 2024, DOI investigators listened to and recorded a call between the undercover DOI investigator posing as the “co-worker” and the defendant, who stated she would provide the co-worker with \$200 in exchange for assistance in passing the exam and obtaining the FPC certificate. On Monday, June 17th, 2024, the defendant handed \$100 to the DOI undercover investigator posing as a DOHMH worker in exchange for the answers to the FPC exam. The defendant offered to provide an additional \$100 after taking and passing the exam. The defendant was arrested immediately after providing \$100 to the undercover investigator to obtain the exam answers.

WHYTE has been employed since October 2023 by the City Department of Education as a School Lunch Helper, where she receives \$16.17 an hour.

DOI Commissioner Strauber thanked Manhattan District Attorney Alvin L. Bragg Jr. and his staff for the prosecution of this matter, which is being handled by Assistant District Attorney Jaime Hickey-Mendoza under the supervision of Jodie Kane, Chief of the Public Integrity Bureau. Commissioner Strauber also thanked DOHMH Commissioner Dr. Aswin Vasan, and DOE Chancellor David C. Banks, for their cooperation in this investigation.

At DOI, the investigation was conducted by Assistant Inspector General Shakina Griffith and Senior Investigator Steven Montague of DOI’s Office of the Inspector General for DOHMH who were supervised by Deputy Inspector General Mary Kozlow, Inspector General Thomas Kapp, Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Initiatives Christopher Ryan and Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella.

A criminal complaint is an accusation. A defendant is 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.

**DOI’s press releases can also be found at twitter.com/NYC_DOI
Know something rotten in City government? Help DOI Get the Worms Out of the Big Apple.
Call: 212-3-NYC-DOI or email: Corruption@DOI.nyc.gov**