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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**D.A. BROWN: HOLLIS HOMEOWNER AND GRANDDAUGHTER**  
**CHARGED WITH WELFARE FRAUD**

*Grandmother Allegedly Concealed Her Ownership of House; Charged City For Renting Room To Herself*

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that a 63-year-old Hollis woman who has owned her own house for the last twenty years has been charged with stealing more than \$26,000 in welfare benefits – including \$5,300 in government-subsidized rent benefits – over a three-year period. Her granddaughter – who allegedly posed as her grandmother’s landlord – has also been charged in the scheme.

The District Attorney identified the defendants as Mary Pierce (a/k/a Mary Rice), 63, and Joy Frazier (a/k/a Detrelle J. Frazier), 25, both of 102-23 184 Street in Queens. Pierce has been charged with third-degree grand larceny, third-degree welfare fraud, second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument and first-degree offering a false instrument for filing. Frazier had been charged with third-degree grand larceny, third-degree welfare fraud and first-degree falsifying business records. If convicted, they each face up to seven years in prison.

District Attorney Brown said, “Thanks to the diligent efforts of a City investigator, these two defendants who allegedly diverted tens of thousands of dollars in welfare and rent money intended for the truly needy have been caught and will now be held accountable for their actions. With so many needy New Yorkers requiring affordable housing, the City will not be tricked into providing subsidized housing to persons who can well afford to pay their own way.”

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the charges, Pierce became a welfare recipient on September 24, 2003, and gave her home address as 102-23 184<sup>th</sup> Street. Approximately a year later, Joy Frazier, who is employed by CDS Overseas, Inc., allegedly submitted a letter dated September 1, 2004, to HRA which falsely stated that Pierce was being charged \$400 per month to live at the 184<sup>th</sup> Street address. Based upon the letter, HRA began issuing rent supplement checks payable to CDS Overseas for Pierce. However, a subsequent review of City real estate records revealed that the 184<sup>th</sup> Street property has been owned by Pierce (a/k/a “Mary Rice”) since 1985 and that a further reexamination revealed that at no time did Joy Frazier or CDS Overseas, Inc., ever own the property. Moreover, a review of the HRA rent checks issued and made payable to CDS for Pierce’s monthly rent revealed they had been endorsed with the signature of Detrelle J. Frazier (a/k/a Joy Frazier) and cashed against her Washington Mutual bank account through which she also had her CDS direct deposit payroll checks deposited. Finally, it is alleged that in filling out a HRA welfare recertification form dated April 4, 2004, Pierce falsely stated that she did not own her own home. As a result of this fraudulent scheme, HRA fraudulently paid the defendants a total of \$26,357 in welfare benefits – specifically \$3,535 in cash assistance, \$4,642 in food stamps, \$5,375 in shelter payments and \$12,805 in Medicaid benefits.

Both defendants were arraigned yesterday before Supervising Criminal Court Judge Deborah Stevens Modica, who released the defendants on their own recognizance and ordered a return date of June 7, 2006.

The investigation was conducted by Investigator Morgan Neuwirth, of HRA’s Bureau of Fraud Investigation, under the supervision of Supervising Investigator Frank Pirra and the overall supervision of Executive Director Alida Mattos. The defendants were arrested by detectives assigned to the New York City Police Department’s Special Frauds Bureau.

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Senior Assistant District Attorney Christine Burke, of the District Attorney’s Economic and Environmental Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Gregory C. Pavlides, Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Linda M. Cantoni.

It should be noted that a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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