



718.286.6000  
WWW.QUEENSDA.ORG

QUEENS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD  
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568



MELINDA KATZ  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2021

**CONTACT: PRESS OFFICE (718) 286-6315**  
[QDACommunications@queensda.org](mailto:QDACommunications@queensda.org)

**QUEENS HOME HEALTH AIDE CHARGED WITH STEALING NEARLY \$100,000  
FROM LEGALLY BLIND 89-YEAR-OLD WOMAN**

*Defendant Allegedly Duped Victim into Signing Checks That Greatly Exceeded Weekly Pay;  
Accused Faces Up to 15 Years in Prison if Convicted*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Sita Saunders, 61, has been charged with grand larceny, identity theft and other crimes for allegedly siphoning nearly \$100,000 from her legally blind, 89-year-old patient's bank accounts from March 2019 through February 2020.

District Attorney Katz said, "An elderly woman suffering from macular degeneration became the victim of her home health aide's alleged scheme. The worker was supposed to be helping the victim. Instead, this defendant allegedly scammed the woman into signing inflated paychecks and ripped her off during regular trips to the bank. The victim's son spotted irregularities and contacted my office. My team investigated and the defendant is now charged with very serious crimes."

Saunders, of 186 Lane in Fresh Meadows, Queens, was arraigned late last night before Queens Criminal Court Judge Mary Bejarano on a complaint charging her with grand larceny in the second degree, criminal possession of stolen property in the second degree and identity theft in the first degree. Judge Bejarano ordered the defendant to return to Court on April 27, 2021. If convicted, Saunders faces up to 15 years in prison.

According to the charges, in December 2019, the son of the victim noticed the balances in his mother's bank accounts had dropped significantly. He reviewed the history of the accounts and noticed several checks payable to Saunders, who cared for the octogenarian victim for some 10 years, that far exceeded her weekly pay of \$1,350.

DA Katz said our investigation allegedly showed the defendant in March 2019 began cashing checks from the victim's checking account for \$1,000 and \$2,000 more than her home health attendant salary. On March 14, 2019 a check for \$3,350 was cashed. On April 4, 2019, another check made out to Saunders totaling \$3,350 was cashed. In all, nine checks for a combined \$9,000 in excess of her pay.

Continuing, according to the charges, part of Saunders' duties included helping the legally blind woman pay her bills. The defendant would present the victim with checks to sign. The defendant also frequently took the elderly woman to the bank and while the victim sat in the waiting area Saunders went to a teller's window. On

several occasions the defendant allegedly made excessive withdrawals from her patient's account without her authorization.

According to the charges, between February 2020 and December 2020 the defendant made 17 withdrawals for \$2,200 up to \$12,000. The defendant is accused of stealing more than \$81,000 through withdrawals from the victim's bank accounts.

The investigation was conducted by Assistant District Attorney Christine Burke, Section Chief of the District Attorney's Elder Fraud Unit, with the assistance of Investigative Accountant Vivian Tunncliff, of the District Attorney's Forensic Accounting Unit, under the supervision of Joseph Plonski, Director of the Forensic Accounting Unit. Also participating in the investigation was New York State Police Investigator Anthony Piacquadio, under the supervision of Senior Investigator MK Fagan, Troop NYC Lieutenant Lucas M. Shuta and under the overall supervision of Troop NYC Commander Douglas A. Larkin.

ADA Burke is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Joseph Conley, Bureau Chief, Herman Wun, Deputy Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard A. Brave.

*Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.*

#

**Note to Editors: Archived press releases are available at [www.queensda.org](http://www.queensda.org).**

