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**EIGHT PEOPLE INDICTED AND CHARGED WITH GRAND LARCENY
FOR CASHING IN ON STOLEN AND/OR FORGED CHECKS AND MONEY ORDERS**

*Defendants Charged in Seven Different Indictments;
Accused Allegedly Used Multiple Banks to Deposit Bogus Checks*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz, joined by the United States Postal Inspector in Charge Philip R. Barnett, announced today that Davonte Sconiers, Allejo Walters and six other individuals have been charged in seven different indictments by a Queens County grand jury after an 18-month-long investigation. The defendants have been arraigned in Supreme Court on grand larceny charges and other crimes. The defendants, in separate incidents, allegedly cashed forged and - in some instances - stolen checks from Queens County residents. The checks were deposited at multiple financial institutions throughout the borough and in other jurisdictions between 2018 and 2019.

District Attorney Katz said, “These cases illustrate how important it is to contact law enforcement when you believe you have been the victim of a phishing scam. This investigation began after my Office and the NYPD received numerous complaints from the public. The defendants in these cases allegedly embraced mail phishing and check forgery as money-making enterprises. One of the defendants allegedly acquired real checks that had been mailed, then changed the payees and money figures and obtained the checking account number of real victims to cash forged checks. These fraudulent deposits totaled tens of thousands of dollars. Caught and in custody, all eight defendants face serious charges.”

Inspector in Charge Bartlett said, “These defendants colluded to steal from the U.S. Mail, then used the stolen information to rob customers of their financial DNA. Identifying and arresting these individuals is the mission of the Postal Inspection Service, maintaining the safety of an American tradition and its customers.”

Walters, 24, was arraigned yesterday on an indictment before Queens Supreme Court Justice Stephanie Zaro. Walters is charged in separate schemes from the co-defendants with grand larceny in the third degree, and other related crimes. Defendant Sconiers, 25, who is also charged separately, was arraigned on July 1, 2021, before Justice Zaro on two of the seven indictments. **(See Addendum for details on all defendants).**

According to the charges, between late 2018 and early 2019, the DA’s Office and the New York City Police Department received a number of complaints from residents who had been victimized in mail phishing schemes. A joint investigation with the NYPD and the United States Postal Inspection Service commenced, which included Court-authorized search warrants for mobile phones, social media accounts, and residential

searches. The cell phones allegedly contained numerous images of checks, bank deposit receipts and text messages between various defendants discussing bank account limits, PIN numbers and security questions.

DA Katz said, defendant Sconiers allegedly made deposits of fraudulent checks totaling well over \$20,000. Following a Court-authorized search of this defendant's home, law enforcement allegedly recovered a bank debit card that was linked to a bank that had received numerous deposits of stolen and forged United States Postal Service money orders. That same search led law enforcement to recover defendant Sconier's phones and following a Court-authorized search of those phones, defendant Sconiers and two others were separately indicted on grand larceny and conspiracy charges following the alleged discovery of additional stolen and forged checks.

The investigations were conducted by Detective Daniel Herzog, of the Financial Crimes Task Force of the New York City Police Department, under the supervision of Captain Brian Eng, Commanding Officer of the Financial Crimes Task Force, as well as the United States Postal Inspection Service Postal Inspectors Robert Moerler and John McDermott, under the supervision of Team Leader Glen McKechnie, under the overall supervision of Inspector in Charge New York Division Philip R. Bartlett.

The District Attorney would like to thank the numerous financial investigators with Bank of America, Capital One Bank and TD Bank for their assistance in these investigations.

Assistant District Attorney Lissa L. Yang, of the District Attorney's Major Economic Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Mary Lowenburg, Bureau Chief, Catherine Kane and Jonathan Scharf, Deputy Chiefs, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard A. Brave.

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ADDENDUM

ALLEJO WALTERS, 24, of 114th Avenue in Jamaica, was arraigned on Tuesday, July 20, 2021, before Queens Supreme Court Justice Stephanie Zaro on an indictment charging him with grand larceny in the third degree and other related charges. The defendant's return date is August 19, 2021. If convicted, Walters faces up to 3 ½ -7 years in prison.

DAVONTE SCONIERS, 25, of 133 Avenue in Jamaica, Queens, was arraigned on July 1, 2021, before Queens Supreme Court Justice Stephanie Zaro on two separate indictments charging him with grand larceny in the third degree and other related charges. The defendant's next Court date is July 28, 2021. If convicted, Sconiers faces up to 3 ½ to 7 years in prison.

MICHAEL FAYEMIWO, 23, of Lanett Avenue in Far Rockaway, Queens, was arraigned on June 22, 2021, before Queens Supreme Court Justice Stephanie Zaro on an indictment charging him with grand larceny in the third degree, falsifying business records in the first degree, identity theft in the first degree and unlawful possession of personal identification information in the third degree. The defendant's next Court date is August 24, 2021. If convicted, Fayemiwo faces up to 3 ½ to 7 years in prison.

TERAE WAMBACH, 29, of 145th Road in Jamaica, Queens, was arraigned on June 28, 2021, before Queens Supreme Court Justice Stephanie Zaro on an indictment charging him with grand larceny in the third degree,

criminal possession of stolen property in the third degree, criminal possession of a forged instrument in the second degree, falsifying business records in the first degree, identity theft in the first degree and unlawful possession of personal identification information in the third degree. The defendant's next Court date is July 28, 2021. If convicted, Wambach faces up to 3 ½ to 7 years in prison.

ORANE DAVIS, 23, of Crandall Avenue in Jamaica, Queens, was arraigned on May 5, 2021, Queens Supreme Court Justice Stephanie Zaro on an indictment charging him with grand larceny in the third degree, criminal possession of stolen property in the third degree, criminal possession of a forged instrument in the second degree, falsifying business records in the first degree, identity theft in the first degree and unlawful possession of personal identification information in the third degree. The defendant's next Court date is August 3, 2021. If convicted, Davis faces up to 3 ½ to 7 years in prison.

CHRISTOPHER TURNAGE, 25, of 169th Street in Jamaica, Queens, was arraigned on June 30, 2021, before Queens Supreme Court Justice Bruna DiBiase on an indictment charging him with grand larceny in the third degree and other related charges. The defendant's next Court date is July 27, 2021. If convicted, Turnage faces up to 2 1/3 to 7 years in prison.

SHAREEFAH KING-PHILLIPS, 44, of 166 Place in Jamaica, Queens, was arraigned on July 8, 2021, before today before Queens Supreme Court Justice Bruna DiBiase on an indictment charging her with grand larceny in the third degree and other related charges. The defendant's next Court date is August 3, 2021. If convicted, King-Phillips faces up to 2 1/3 to 7 years in prison.

NIKIA THOMAS, 26, of Moffat Street in Brooklyn, was arraigned on June 24, 2021, before Queens Supreme Court Justice Stephanie Zaro on an indictment charging her with grand larceny in the third degree and other related charges. The defendant's next Court date is August 30, 2021. If convicted, Thomas faces up to 2 1/3 to 7 year in prison.

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

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