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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2020

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ISSUES WARNING ABOUT BUSINESS EMAIL SCAMS

Business transactions that require good faith and trust are increasingly being conducted online and through email. Due to the coronavirus pandemic and increasing reliance on technology, transactions once done by in-person interactions and even a trusted handshake now take place virtually. Unfortunately, online predators and scammers have caught on and are using manipulative business email schemes to prey on consumers.

Individuals are led to believe they are communicating with someone they trust – a lawyer, business acquaintance, etc. - and then are conned into sending or transferring money to the perpetrator who is just pretending to be someone they trust.

My Office is actively pursuing wrongdoers to protect Queens residents from these scam artists. Members of the Queens Bar and realty community members should be aware that their electronic communications could be vulnerable and should take measures to protect their clients.

Today, our office is returning \$38,671.50 recovered from an attempted business email compromise scheme. Ms. Alemina Kadribegic and her father thought they were exchanging emails with their lawyer. They sent a down payment for an apartment they were buying in Queens to their attorney's escrow account. In reality, Ms. Kadribegic had actually been misdirected by an imposter to send the money to a bank which the scammer had accessed. Instead of depositing money into a bank in Long Island, our investigation revealed, the account that received Kadribegic's funds was actually physically located in Texas. The owner of the Texas account then withdrew approximately \$10,500 of Ms. Kadribegic's funds.

Members of my Office worked with the New York City Police Department and several law enforcement agencies in Texas to recover most of the money scammed from the victims in this case. The investigation is on-going. Today, however, we were able to return a substantial amount of the funds to the victims of this scheme.

I would like to thank Ms. Kadribegic and her lawyer, William Slutsky, for their diligence and assistance. Mr. Slutsky realized his online identity had been compromised and subsequently used in a ruse to gain the trust of the father and daughter.

Assistant District Attorney Christina Hanophy, of the Queens District Attorney's Housing and Worker Protection Bureau, along with Detective Marcelo Razzo of the New York City Police Department's Financial Crimes Task Force investigated this case, along with law enforcement agencies in Texas.

If you or your clients become the victim of an email solicitation, you should save whatever evidence you have, including any exchanged messages and the contact information. Contact your local precinct or call us at (718) 286-6673.

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Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted at www.queensda.org.