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MELINDA KATZ  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2024

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**ALLEGED SQUATTER INDICTED FOR ILLEGALLY OCCUPYING HOWARD BEACH HOME**

*Trespassed Onto Vacant Property, Attempted to Change Locks, Moved Items In and Out of Home  
Property Neighbors Alerted Authorities*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Laurel Bay has been indicted on charges of burglary, criminal trespass and other crimes for illegally occupying a single-family home in Howard Beach. The property had been vacant since 2012, with the homeowner managing the property from out of state. Observant neighbors spotted the defendant allegedly moving items in and out of the home and reported the activity to the police.

District Attorney Katz said: “It is against the law to walk into someone else’s home without permission and claim you have a right to stay – even if a property is vacant. This defendant is accused of illegally trespassing onto someone else’s property and trying to claim the home as her own. Thanks to the vigilance of nearby neighbors, my office was promptly alerted and the defendant has now been indicted on serious charges.”

Bay, 49, of 198<sup>th</sup> Street in Hollis, was arraigned today on a five-count indictment charging her with burglary in the second degree, criminal mischief in the fourth degree, criminal trespass in the second degree, petit larceny and criminal possession of stolen property in the fifth degree.

Supreme Court Justice Toni Cimino ordered Bay to return to court November 26. If convicted of the top count, Bay faces a potential maximum sentence of 15 years in prison.

DA Katz said that, according to the charges, on July 18, 2024, at approximately 8:40 p.m., an eyewitness observed Bay moving items in and out of the home located on 99<sup>th</sup> Street. Police were called and the responding officers observed the defendant coming out from the front door of the location. The defendant was arrested and issued a desk appearance ticket for criminal trespass.

Several days later, on July 21, at approximately 9:20 a.m., the same eyewitness observed items moved around inside the home and the basement door open. When the police were called to the property once again, they observed Bay crawl out of the basement window of the home. She was arrested again and issued a second desk appearance ticket for criminal trespass.

It was later determined that the front and back doors of the house were damaged as the defendant allegedly tried to change the locks.

Assistant District Attorney William Jorgenson, Bureau Chief of the District Attorney's Housing and Worker Protection Bureau, is prosecuting the case with the assistance of Assistant District Attorney Christina Hanophy, Deputy Bureau Chief, and under the supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard A. Brave.

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

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