

Department of Justice

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Western District of New York

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FORMER ROCHESTER WOMAN **PLEADS GUILTY TO THEFT OF HUD FUNDS**

ROCHESTER, N.Y.-- U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that Lavonya Bess, 59, of Jacksonville, Florida, pleaded guilty to theft of public money before U.S. District Judge Charles J. Siragusa. The charge carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Tiffany H. Lee, who is handling the case, stated that between October 2006 and October 2010, while she was residing in the Western District of New York, the defendant applied for and received United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 8 benefits to assist her with rent. In her application, Bess claimed to be the tenant of a residence located on Flanders Street in the City of Rochester when in fact, she was the owner of the residence. The defendant converted over \$30,000 in Section 8 housing benefits for her own use to which she was not entitled.

The plea is the culmination of an investigation on the part of special agents of the Department of Housing and Urban Development under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Cary Rubenstein.

Sentencing is scheduled for November 5 at 4 p.m. before Judge Siragusa.

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