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Five NYS Correction Officers Arrested for Fraudulent Schemes to Obtain Unearned Sick Leave & Workers' Compensation Benefits

Ulster County District Attorney Emmanuel C. Nneji, New York State Inspector General Lucy Lang, and New York State Police Superintendent Steven G. James today announced the arrests of five current and former New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) employees for separate schemes to defraud DOCCS and the State's workers' compensation system, resulting in a loss of more than \$15,000 to the State. The arrests, which stem from an eighteen-month investigation conducted by the Offices of the New York State Inspector General into workers' compensation abuses at the Ulster and Wallkill Correctional Facilities, are a clear signal that such conduct will not be tolerated in the four Correctional Facilities located in Ulster County, or anywhere throughout the DOCCS System.

The defendants, while working as correction officers at Ulster or Wallkill Correctional Facilities, allegedly submitted falsified medical documentation attesting to illness or workplace injuries, or engaged in prohibited employment while collecting full salaries under the DOCCS–New York State Correctional Officer and Police Benevolent Association (NYSCOPBA) workers' compensation contract benefit program. More specifically, three of the defendants are alleged to have submitted one or more fraudulent "Documentation for Workers' Compensation Leave" (DWCL) forms that purported to be signed by medical professionals attesting to examinations that never took place, enabling them to obtain workers' compensation leave benefits.

A fourth defendant, who asserted to his medical provider that he was 100% disabled and unable to work because of a claimed workplace eye injury, enabling him to obtain workers' compensation benefits, is alleged to have been working during that time as a state-funded home health aide, for which he was paid over \$4,500 by the state.

The fifth defendant is alleged to have submitted in excess of twenty (20) forged sick leave medical notes over a two-year period, enabling him to collect unearned sick leave wages and take unpaid time off when he was scheduled to be at work.

District Attorney Nneji condemned the fraud, emphasizing its far-reaching consequences for the DOCCS and for the public:

“Workers’ compensation fraud is not a victimless crime,” said **DA Nneji**. “Every dollar stolen through deceit is a dollar diverted from legitimate injury claims and essential State programs at a time of crisis. The fact that these schemes were perpetuated by sworn public officers, who were entrusted with maintaining the safety and security of New York’s correctional facilities and those within them, makes the charged conduct even more egregious. The type of conduct involved here gives a bad name to scrupulous public officers regardless of the amount of benefit received. This collaborative effort demonstrates that those who attempt to cheat the system and the public for personal gain will be held accountable, no matter who they are.”

New York State Inspector General Lang also underscored the broader implications of such crimes:

“This conduct worsens already severe staffing shortages within New York’s correctional facilities, undermines rehabilitation programming, and jeopardizes the safety of both staff and the incarcerated population,” said **Inspector General Lang**. “As our prior reporting about rampant abuse of the Workers’ Compensation system by DOCCS officers reflects (see: [Bit.ly/oig_wc](https://bit.ly/oig_wc)), these crimes both erode trust in government and drain resources that should be dedicated to workers’ rights, public safety, and rehabilitation.”

New York State Police Superintendent Steven G. James commended the joint effort and stressed the importance of integrity in law enforcement:

“Law enforcement officers are held to the highest standards of integrity,” said **New York State Police Superintendent Steven G. James**. “Those who choose to defraud the system undermine the trust placed in all public servants. The State Police will continue to work with our partners to ensure that those who abuse their positions for personal gain are identified and held accountable.”

Defendants Christine Donovan, Jeremy LaChance, and Anthony Tacti were arraigned yesterday afternoon before Town of Ulster Justice Susan Kesick and were released on their own recognizance. Defendants Ashli Paulino and Brian Porter were issued Desk Appearance Tickets by the New York State Police and will be arraigned at a later date.

The Ulster County District Attorney’s Office reminds the public that the charges are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.

Charges & Alleged Conduct

Christine Donovan, Age 41, Lake Katrine, NY (Ulster Correctional Facility)

- Grand Larceny in the Third Degree (D Felony, PL §155.35)
Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree (E Felony, PL §175.35) – 2 Counts
- Alleged to have submitted two forged out-of-work notes documenting a nonexistent medical visit in February 2023, resulting in \$5,938.44 in improperly paid workers’ compensation benefits. Donovan was previously terminated by DOCCS.

Jeremy LaChance, Age 42, Kerhonkson, NY (Wallkill Correctional Facility)

- Grand Larceny in the Third Degree (D Felony, PL §155.35)
Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree (E Felony, PL §175.35) – 2 Counts
- Alleged to have submitted 22 forged medical notes in support of personal sick leave excusing him from work as incapacitated, and one forged medical note in support of family sick leave, excusing him from work to care for a minor. As a result of these notes, he received approximately \$3,021.13 in sick leave payments to which he was not entitled and entitled to take other unpaid leave that otherwise would not have been permitted. LaChance remains employed by DOCCS.

Ashli Paulino, Age 36, Mountain Dale, NY (Ulster Correctional Facility)

- Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree (E Felony, PL §155.30)
Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree (E Felony, PL §175.35) – 2 Counts
- Alleged to have submitted two forged Documentation for Workers' Compensation Leave (DWCL) forms documenting nonexistent medical visits in November 2022 and March 2023, resulting in \$1,719.00 in improperly paid workers' compensation benefits. Paulino previously resigned from DOCCS.

Brian Porter, Age 49, Monticello, NY (Ulster Correctional Facility)

- Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree (E Felony, PL §155.30)
Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree (E Felony, PL §175.35)
- Alleged to have submitted one forged Documentation for Workers' Compensation Leave (DWCL) form documenting a nonexistent medical visit in November 2021, resulting in \$1,053.74 in improperly paid workers' compensation benefits. Porter was previously terminated by DOCCS.

Anthony Tacti, Age 34, Kerhonkson, NY (Ulster Correctional Facility)

- Grand Larceny in the Third Degree (D Felony, PL §155.35) – 2 Counts
Fraudulent Practices (E Felony, WCL §114(1))
Insurance Fraud in the Third Degree (D Felony, PL §176.20)
Health Care Fraud (E Felony, PL §177.10)
- While on leave due to a claimed workplace injury, and receiving full salary benefits directly from DOCCS, defendant is alleged to have claimed a 100% disability and inability to work to his treating physician despite working for much of that leave as a home health aide through the state CDPAP program. Upon returning to work at DOCCS, defendant is alleged to have continued working for CDPAP, billing for overlapping hours with his state employment. Tacti is accused of receiving more than **\$4,700** in improper CDPAP wages and **\$4,281** in fraudulent workers' compensation benefits. Tacti remains employed by DOCCS.

The Ulster County District Attorney thanked his team for their work on this case, including ADA Karin Intermill who took these cases head-on from the first day she joined our Office, New York State Police Bureau of Criminal Investigation at SP Ellenville for their great assistance to ADA Intermill and the IG Investigators, and former ADA Sajaa Ahmed who initially worked on the case with Investigators from the Inspector General's Office.

The Inspector General also thanked her team for their work on this investigation, including Attorney-In-Charge of Workers' Compensation Fraud Bryan Richmond, Attorney-in-Charge of

DOCCS Matters Jonathan Schultz, Investigative Counsel Brandon Riddle, Managing Investigator for DOCCS Matters Jeffrey Haber, Senior Investigators Dale Richter and Jackie Desaultels, Senior Auditor Katherine Rizzo, and Investigator Amy McMullen. Inspector General Lang also offered particular thanks to District Attorney Nneji for his partnership in this prosecution, the State Police for their assistance in effectuating these arrests, as well as the leadership at Ulster Correctional Facility who called attention to the issues within that facility, prompting the investigation leading to these arrests.

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