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ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL: COOK COUNTY MAN SENTENCED FOR FRAUD

Former Chicago Housing Authority Contractor Bribed Applicants Seeking Housing Assistance

Chicago — Attorney General Kwame Raoul today announced a Cook County man was sentenced to 180 days in jail with three years of probation and ordered to pay \$8,400 in fines for soliciting bribes from applicants to the Chicago Housing Authority's (CHA) Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Brian Rice, 42, was sentenced by Cook County Circuit Court Judge Michael Clancy after pleading guilty to one count of bribery for each of his 10 cases.

"Brian Rice abused his position to take advantage of individuals in need of affordable housing for his own personal gain," Raoul said. "My office will continue to ensure that public employees are held accountable to the public they serve. I hope this sentence will send the message that we will hold accountable those who use their positions to profit at taxpayers' expense."

Raoul charged Rice in January 2020 alleging that between October 2018 and January 2019, Rice was an employee of Nan McKay and Associates, a company contracted to administer the CHA's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. According to Raoul, Rice used his CHA credentials to solicit bribes from individuals applying for placement on CHA's waiting list, as well as those already waiting to receive Housing Choice Vouchers. The Chicago Housing Authority, Office of the Inspector General opened an investigation after the CHA received more than 50 applications submitted under the same circumstances.

"CHA's public mission is critically important and we will not tolerate any abuse of this trust," CHA CEO Tracey Scott said. "I applaud our investigators from CHA's Office of the Inspector General for their diligent pursuit of this case and the Illinois Attorney General's Office for securing the conviction."

Raoul alleged that between November 2018 and June 2019 – even after his employment was terminated – Rice used his CHA identification and email to convince applicants he had the ability to bypass the waiting list in exchange for several thousand dollars. Upon receiving payment, Rice provided applicants with an HCV and false information to provide to landlords. Once a landlord submitted the fraudulent information to the CHA, they were informed that neither the HCV nor the required tenant number could be verified.

According to Raoul, individuals paid between \$1,800 and \$2,500, and it is estimated that Rice collected more than \$116,000 in bribes. While Rice repaid some of the money, in other instances he changed his phone number so that individuals who paid bribes could no longer contact him.

"Rice maliciously exploited low-income individuals who were seeking safe, affordable housing from CHA," CHA Inspector General Kathryn Richards said. "Rice's conviction is the result of extensive investigation by CHA OIG investigators dedicated to preserving integrity and public trust in CHA programs. The OIG commends those victims who cooperated with the investigation and the Illinois Attorney General's Public Integrity Bureau staff who worked to ensure Rice was brought to justice."

Assistant Attorney General Jonas Harger handled prosecution of the case for Raoul's Public Integrity Bureau. Investigator Justin King handled the case for the CHA's Office of the Inspector General.