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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**NEW YORK CITY BUILDING INSPECTOR CHARGED WITH TAKING BRIBES**

*Payoffs were Made in Exchange for Overlooking Potential Violations*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Zabihullah Ibrahim, a city building inspector, was arraigned today on bribery and official misconduct charges for taking cash from homeowners in exchange for closing complaints about their property. In one case, he allegedly asked for \$3,500 from a homeowner and, when she said she had no cash, directed her to go to the bank and get it while he waited outside her home.

District Attorney Katz said: “When city officials charged with keeping the public safe decide to shirk their responsibilities in favor of lining their own pockets, everybody loses. Thank you to the Department of Investigation and the Department of Buildings for their work on this case.”

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said: “As charged, instead of doing his job — to identify unsafe and illegal residences — this City inspector used his position of authority to solicit bribes from homeowners. Thankfully, homeowners, as well as DOB, reported this alleged misconduct to DOI, prompting our investigation, together with our partners in the Queens District Attorney’s Office, and resulting in the complaint that was filed. DOI anticipates proposing a number of policy and procedural reforms to the City Department of Buildings to reduce the risk of inspector misconduct.”

Department of Buildings Commissioner Jimmy Oddo said: “The Department of Buildings is committed to upholding the highest standards of integrity, both in the construction industry and within our own ranks. When we became aware of the alleged behavior of this employee, we immediately referred the issue to our partners in law enforcement and have worked closely with them throughout their investigation. This employee has already been placed on leave without pay, and in the interest of public safety we have already conducted a thorough audit of his previous work here at the department and taken appropriate enforcement actions. We thank the Queens District Attorney’s Office and the Department of Investigation for their continue partnership in helping to root out corruption, wherever it is found.”

Ibrahim, 42, of 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue in College Point, was arraigned on three counts of bribe receiving in the third degree and three counts of official misconduct. Criminal Court Judge Julieta Lozano ordered him to return to court on June 17. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

According to the charges:

- Ibrahim worked as a building inspector for the city Department of Buildings and his duties included responding to 311 complaints, inspecting homes to verify that alleged complaints existed and, if so, issuing violations.
- On January 10, 2023, Ibrahim visited a home on 111<sup>th</sup> Street in South Ozone Park to conduct an inspection of the basement. He took photos of the basement and told the homeowner that her basement was illegal, it would cost a lot of money to legalize it and that he could fix it for \$1,500.
- The homeowner then showed Ibrahim \$140 saying it was all she had. He took the money and told the woman that she should reschedule the inspection and he would close the case. He then dialed his own phone number from the woman's phone and instructed her to say she wanted another inspection. He picked up the phone while she was standing next to him.
- He called the woman 10 minutes after leaving the property saying he had closed the inspection. Building Department records indicate the complaint was closed because entry could not be obtained to the property.
- On December 18, 2023, Ibrahim told a property owner on 116<sup>th</sup> Street in South Jamaica that her house had a violation that would cost her \$3,000, but he did not want to write a violation for her.
- The woman asked Ibrahim if he wanted money and he asked for \$500. She told him she only had \$300 and gave it to him in exchange for not writing a violation.
- Building Department records indicate the complaint was closed stating no violation was warranted.
- On January 25, 2024, Ibrahim visited a property on 193<sup>rd</sup> Street in St. Albans and told the homeowner there were issues that needed to be fixed and to give him \$3,500. The woman said she did not have any money and Ibrahim then told her to go to the bank and get \$1,000. She left to get the cash while Ibrahim waited outside her home. She returned and gave him the money.
- Building Department records show the complaint was closed because an inspector was unable to gain access since the property owner failed to keep the inspection appointment.

Assistant District Attorney Gabriella Giunta of the District Attorney's Public Corruption Bureau is prosecuting the case, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Khadijah Muhammad-Starling, Bureau Chief, and Christine Olivera, Deputy Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard Brave.

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

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