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DARCEL D. CLARK
DISTRICT ATTORNEY, BRONX COUNTY

198 EAST 161ST STREET
BRONX, N.Y. 10451
(718) 590-2234

For Immediate Release
July 6, 2016

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF BAYCHESTER YOUTH COUNCIL INDICTED
FOR STEALING MORE THAN \$100,000 FROM FEDERAL GRANT
Earnestine Russell Charged with Grand Larceny; Allegedly Gambled Funds**

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark and New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli today announced that the longtime director of a Bronx youth group has been indicted on charges she stole \$112,000 from a state-administered, federally funded grant to support after-school programs for middle school children.

District Attorney Clark said, "The defendant, Earnestine Russell, allegedly turned the Baychester Youth Council into a façade for her thievery, and enriched herself for years instead of enriching the lives of the children she purported to cherish."

State Comptroller DiNapoli said, "Earnestine Russell allegedly took public money intended to give children a safe and nurturing place to go after school and spent it on personal trips and electronic equipment for herself. After my office found her theft, we worked closely with Bronx County District Attorney Darcel D. Clark and her staff to make certain that Ms. Russell is held accountable."

District Attorney Clark said that Russell, 66, of 1930 Schiefflin Avenue, was indicted on second-degree grand larceny and second-degree criminal possession of stolen property. She was arraigned today, July 6, 2016, before Bronx Supreme Court Justice Steven Barrett. Bail was set at \$30,000 cash and an examination of surety. Russell is due back in court on August 9, 2016.

According to the investigation by the Bronx District Attorney's Office and the State Comptroller's Office, in 2008, Russell--who has run the Baychester Youth Council since the 1980s--received a federal grant, administered by the New York State Education Department, for more than \$2.7 million over five years to create a 21st Century Community Learning Center.



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The State Comptroller's Office audited Russell in 2012 and found she used \$250,400 for inappropriate or undocumented expenses-- including a home theater-- and the grant was revoked.

The Bronx DA's Office began investigating and found that Russell had moved the grant money through numerous bank accounts. Russell made cash withdrawals, wrote checks to cash, herself or family, and made wire transfers from the accounts. When confronted with her gambling records, which showed betting of more than \$150,000 during the fraud period of 2009-2011, Russell denied betting, then explained the figures also showed winnings she bet. Russell also told investigators that she could "make whatever use of [the money]" she saw fit.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorneys Markus Szejnberg of the Economic Crimes Bureau and Jeffrey Glucksman, Chief of Trial Bureau 70, under the supervision of William Zelenka, Chief of the Economic Crimes Bureau, and Jean T. Walsh, Chief of the Investigations Division.

District Attorney Clark thanked the State Comptroller's Division of Investigations and Bureau of State Expenditures, as well as New York State Police Investigators John Bode and Charles Sands and Senior Investigators Michael Vazquez, Michael Davis and John Vescio for their assistance in the investigation, and retired Assistant Bronx District Attorney Linda Tacoma for her diligent work on the case.

An indictment is an accusatory instrument and not proof of a defendant's guilt.

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