



**Office of the District Attorney**  
**P. David Soares**  
6 Lodge Street  
Albany, New York 12207  
(518) 487-5460  
(518) 487-5093 FAX

**CONTACT: CECILIA LOGUE (518) 275-4710**  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: TUESDAY, AUGUST 14, 2012

## **Store Clerk in Welfare Fraud Scam Sentenced to State Prison**



**Albany, NY-** District Attorney P. David Soares announced today that ELHADI ABDALLA, 48, of Albany, was sentenced to 1 ½ - 3 years in state prison before Judge Stephen W. Herrick in Albany County Court this morning for his role in a long-term welfare fraud scam. ABDALLA had previously pleaded guilty to (1) Count of Grand Larceny in the 4th Degree, a Class "E" Felony.

Between January 20, 2011 and March 17, 2011, ABDALLA worked at the South Pearl Street Deli and Grocery on 267 South Pearl Street in Albany and engaged in a scheme to profit from illegal welfare card transactions.

ABDALLA was arrested by Albany Police Department with assistance from the Albany County Sherriff's Department after a long term investigation by Albany County Department of Social Services. The investigation was assisted by the US Food and Drug Administration, the NYS Office of Temporary Disability Assistance, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the State Law Enforcement Board.

The investigation uncovered that taxpayer-funded benefits of the USDA Foodstamp Program, which is administered by the Albany County Department of Social Services, were being fraudulently abused at several local stores. Card recipients would allow store operators to use, and sometimes empty, the value on their electronic food stamp benefits cards while store owners would then keep the cash valued at up to half the amount of money on the cards. Many of these exchanges were caught on video and they show card holders entering the market and then leaving several minutes later with no bags or groceries, although the cards were charges with up to \$399 at those times.

Three other individuals were arrested as a result of this investigation. ROBERT CASTRO, owner and operator of Franze's Market on 53 North Swan Street, was sentenced on April 4, 2012 to 1 to 3 years in state prison after pleading guilty to (1) count of Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, a Class "D" Felony. RICARDO FABIAN, owner of New City Market on 561 Clinton Ave pleaded guilty to (1) count of Criminal Possession of Public Benefit Cards in the Second Degree on March 8, 2012 and was sentenced on May 3, 2012 to 1 to 3 years in state prison. A final case against LATERIO SANTOS is awaiting trial.

DA Soares believes the case should serve as a warning to all those who wish to defraud the taxpayers of Albany County that justice will be dealt swiftly and severely. "The loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars from the stores participating in this coordination of welfare fraud hurts those in our community who truly need social assistance. Those who are responsible for such actions will be held accountable for defrauding the taxpayers of this county."

Assistant District Attorney Chris Baynes handled the prosecution of the case.

For more information, please contact Cecilia Logue.

###