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PRESS RELEASE

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Florida Nursing School President Pleads Guilty for His Role in Defrauding D.C.'s Department of Disability Services

Defendant Conspired with Former D.C. Government Employee Who Pled Guilty in July

WASHINGTON – Cleophat Tanis, 52, of Naples, Florida, pled guilty today to one count of mail fraud for his role in a scheme that caused the District of Columbia's Department of Disability Services to be defrauded out of more than \$880,000. Tanis conspired with Eugenia Rapp, 50, of Woodbridge, Virginia, a former D.C. government employee, who pled guilty to conspiracy to commit mail fraud in July.

The announcement was made by U.S. Attorney Jessie K. Liu; Timothy M. Dunham, Special Agent in Charge, FBI Washington Field Office, Criminal Division; Aaron R. Jordan, Assistant Inspector General for Investigations, Department of Education; and Daniel W. Lucas, Inspector General for the District of Columbia.

Tanis and Rapp pled guilty in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Tanis faces a statutory maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. Rapp faces a statutory maximum sentence of five years in prison. Both face potential financial penalties. Judge Trevor N. McFadden scheduled Tanis' sentencing for March 13, 2020. Judge McFadden is expected to set a sentencing date for Rapp at her status hearing tomorrow morning.

According to the statement of offense submitted to the Court in Tanis' case, Rapp worked as a vocational rehabilitation counselor with the District of Columbia's Department of Disability Services, Rehabilitation Services Administration ("DCRSA"). The DCRSA Vocational Rehabilitation program provides vocational rehabilitation benefits, like college tuition, to qualified individuals with disabilities to help them prepare for and engage in gainful employment. Individuals must be D.C. residents to be eligible for the benefits.

From 2012 through 2016, Rapp conspired with others to defraud the D.C. government by having benefits awarded to individuals who weren't eligible to receive them. In her role as a vocational rehabilitation counselor, Rapp was responsible for determining whether an individual was eligible to receive the benefits. Notwithstanding D.C. government policy regarding conflicts of interest, Rapp served as the vocational rehabilitation counselor for more than 20 individuals whom she described as being related to her. She knew these individuals were not eligible to receive benefits, but ensured that she was assigned to be their vocational rehabilitation counselor, so she could process and approve their applications. As a result, the D.C. government awarded vocational rehabilitation benefits totaling approximately \$834,536 to Rapp's family members and friends.

When one of Rapp's family members wanted to attend Tanis' nursing school, Rapp worked with Tanis to get his school added as an approved vendor with the D.C. government. During that process, Tanis told Rapp that his school was struggling financially and asked her to use her position to help pay tuition for students at his school. Tanis knew that students had to be D.C. residents in order to be eligible to receive benefits, but worked with Rapp to get \$47,895 in benefits awarded to five students at his school who were not D.C. residents and who had no familial relationship to Rapp. During the scheme, Tanis provided one of Rapp's relatives with a full scholarship to attend his school. Rapp also asked him to provide money to that relative, which he did.

In announcing Tanis' plea, U.S. Attorney Liu, Special Agent in Charge Dunham, Assistant Inspector General Jordan, and Inspector General Lucas commended the work of those who investigated the case from Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Education's Office of Inspector General, and the District of Columbia's Officer of Inspector General. They also expressed appreciation for the work of Paralegal Specialist Mariela Andrade, and former Paralegal Specialists Brittany Phillips and Jessica Mundi. Finally, they commended the work of Assistant U.S. Attorney Kondi Kleinman, who is prosecuting the case.