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Mortgage Fraud Results in Charges for West Michigan Woman

November 4, 2009

LANSING - Attorney General Mike Cox today announced that his office has filed charges against a Wyoming, MI woman accused of defrauding the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) by fraudulently obtaining a mortgage, defaulting on that mortgage and leaving taxpayers to pick up the tab.

Maria Antonia Franks Hernandez is accused of stealing her sister's identity between December 2003 and February 2004 to fraudulently obtain an \$83,000 mortgage through MSHDA. She then defaulted on the mortgage, leaving taxpayers with a balance of more that \$76,000. Franks Hernandez's sister resides in Mexico.

"Mortgage fraud is making it harder for people who play by the rules to achieve the American dream of home ownership," said Cox.

Franks Hernandez is charged with one count of false pretenses over \$20,000, a 10-year felony, as well as one count of identity theft, a 5-year felony. Franks Hernandez was arraigned Friday in the 61st District Court in Grand Rapids before Judge Donald Passenger. The court imposed a \$5,000 bond and Franks Hernandez is next due in court for a preliminary examination before Judge Jeanine LaVille on November 10. The charges are the result of a joint effort by the Michigan Attorney General's office, the Michigan State Police and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Attorney General Cox has made prosecuting mortgage fraud a priority. In 2008, Cox created a mortgage fraud unit and teamed up with the Michigan State Police and other law enforcement agencies to tackle the problem. Cox's office has also held mortgage foreclosure forums across the state to help families stay in their homes during these difficult times.

A criminal charge is merely an accusation and the Defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty.



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