



TIMOTHY J. CRUZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
PLYMOUTH DISTRICT

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
MAIN OFFICE:
166 MAIN STREET
BROCKTON, MA 02301
TEL: (508) 584-8120

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CONTACT: BETH STONE
(508) 584-8120

BROCKTON WOMAN WHO RAN RENTAL FRAUD SCHEME SENT TO JAIL

BROCKTON – A woman pleaded guilty and was sentenced to jail for securing rental properties through fraudulent means and failing to pay rent, Plymouth County District Attorney Timothy J. Cruz has announced.

Today, Michelle Madeira Fontes, 42, pleaded guilty in Brockton Superior Court to two counts of Larceny by False Pretenses. Judge William Sullivan sentenced Fontes to serve 2 ½ years in the House of Correction, with one year to serve and the balance suspended for two years.

The Commonwealth recommended that Fontes serve 2-3 years state prison, followed by three years of probation with conditions that she stay away from and have no contact with the victims, pay restitution, and maintain employment. Judge Sullivan adopted the probationary conditions.

Between April 2023 and February 2024, Fontes defrauded two separate Brockton landlords by securing rental housing under false pretenses and failing to pay rent. The victims are all Cape Verdean individuals who are not large-scale property owners, but rely on rental income as their primary livelihood. Two additional landlords came forward during the investigation, reporting that Fontes failed to pay rent and forced them to endure lengthy housing court proceeding before ultimately evicting her.

Fontes exploited shared cultural background and language to gain trust before deceiving the victims. When confronted about unpaid rent, she repeatedly offered false assurances, claiming she would cover arrears through personal funds or charitable assistance. On multiple occasions, she provided fraudulent documentation -- including forged bank letters, falsified pay stubs, and fabricated nonprofit letters -- to bolster her claims.

As a result, Fontes was evicted from multiple properties and frequently left rental units in severe disrepair.

Assistant District Attorney Alex Zane prosecuted the case, which was investigated by the Plymouth County District Attorney's Office, in coordination with Brockton Police and multiple defrauded property owners who came forward.

