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**DA KATZ, NYPD AND SHERIFF'S OFFICE SHUTTER UNLICENSED CANNABIS SHOP IN SUNNYSIDE**

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced the closure of an unlicensed cannabis shop that operated near the Thomas A. Noonan Playground on Greenpoint Avenue in Sunnyside. A woman working at the shop was charged with criminal sale of cannabis and criminal possession of a controlled substance.

District Attorney Katz said: "This shop, which was located across the street from a playground, had become the subject of numerous community complaints. We will continue our enforcement actions on unlicensed marijuana dealers who sell unregulated products that are often targeted to children. These dispensaries also fail to pay tax revenue for public services and undermine licensed sellers who prioritize safety and compliance."

Currently, there are 226 licensed adult recreational-use cannabis dispensaries open in New York state, including 21 in Queens. There are 39 state-authorized medical marijuana dispensaries, including three in Queens.

Estefania Palaquibay, 22, of 91<sup>st</sup> Drive in Woodhaven was arraigned Saturday on charges of criminal possession of a controlled substance in the fifth degree, criminal sale of cannabis in the third degree and unlawful possession of cannabis. Judge Germaine Auguste ordered Palaquibay to return to court on January 7, 2025.

According to the charges, on November 1, detectives from District Attorney Katz's office and NYPD officers executed a court-authorized search warrant at the Green Point Convenience Corp. at 42-18 Greenpoint Avenue in Sunnyside.

Detectives recovered a large quantity cannabis flower in a glass container and cannabis infused edibles. Palaquibay was also found to have psilocybin, also known as "magic mushrooms," in her bag.

This operation is part of the District Attorney's ongoing effort to rid Queens of illegal cannabis dispensaries, whether operating out of trucks and vans or brick-and-mortar commercial locations.

Since November 2022, enforcement operations have resulted in the prosecution of 313 individuals for felony-related charges related to the sale and/or possession of cannabis or controlled substances in Queens.

To date, the following items – with an estimated combined value of more than \$23 million – have been seized from more than 400 suspected illegal cannabis dispensaries in Queens County:

- More than 5,000 pounds of cannabis edibles, including gummies and candy bars

- More than 7,750 pounds of cannabis flower
- Hundreds of packages of edible psilocybin
- Over 15,500 cannabis vape “pens”

District Attorney Katz has also initiated eviction proceedings pursuant to the Real Property Actions and Proceedings Law stores operating as illegal smoke shops.

A total of 208 shops in Queens County have been padlocked since July 2024 through the assistance of the New York City Sheriff’s Office and the NYPD.

The investigation into the unlicensed cannabis dispensary in Sunnyside was conducted by Assistant District Attorney Shanon LaCorte, Chief of the District Attorney’s Crime Strategies and Intelligence Bureau, with assistance from Senior Intelligence Analyst Victoria Filipe along with members of the Queens District Attorney’s Detective Bureau under the supervision of Sergeant David Moore, Lieutenant Joseph Oliver, Deputy Chief Janet Helgeson, Assistant Chief Daniel O’Brien, and under the overall supervision of the Chief Investigator of the Detective Bureau Robert LaPollo.

Assistant District Attorney Kieran Linehan, Section Chief, Major Narcotics in the Major Economic Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Mary Lowenburg, Bureau Chief, Catherine Kane, Senior Deputy Bureau Chief, Jonathan Scharf, Deputy Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney of Investigations Gerard Brave.

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*Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.*

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