



718.286.6000
WWW.QUEENSDA.ORG

QUEENS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568

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twitter@QueensDAKatz



MELINDA KATZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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CONTACT: PRESS (718) 286-6315
QDACommunications@queensda.org

**MAN CHARGED WITH APPROACHING 12- AND 14-YEAR-OLD GIRLS
WALKING HOME FROM SCHOOL FOR EXPLICIT PHOTOS, SEX ACTS**

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that James Villarruel was arraigned on a charge of promoting an obscene sexual performance by a child and other crimes after allegedly paying a 14-year-old girl to perform a sex act and take lewd photos and videos of him, and trying to pay a 12-year-old girl to take photos of him. Villarruel is accused of approaching the girls on a recent afternoon in Flushing as they walked home from school.

District Attorney Katz said: “The actions alleged here are any parent’s worst nightmare. Fortunately, the children bravely told family members what happened, enabling us to hold the defendant accountable for the disturbing charges against him.”

Villarruel, 32, of 260th Street in Glen Oaks, was arraigned last night on an 11-count complaint charging him with promoting an obscene sexual performance by a child, promoting a sexual performance by a child, felony luring a child, patronizing a person for prostitution in the second degree, forcible touching, public lewdness in the first degree, two counts of endangering the welfare of a child, stalking in the fourth degree, sexual abuse in the third degree and harassment in the second degree.

Queens Criminal Court Judge Maria Gonzalez ordered the defendant to return to court June 30. If convicted, Villarruel faces up to 8 years in prison.

According to the charges:

- On June 15, at approximately 2:30 p.m., Villarruel followed a 12-year-old girl walking home from her middle school on Colden Street in Flushing, approached her and asked, “What are you going to get your dad for Father’s Day” and, “Do you have any money.” He gave the child approximately \$90 and told her she was pretty and that he wanted to do a photo shoot with her in nearby Kissena Park.
- As they walked toward the park, Villarruel placed his thumb on the girl’s face. The victim secretly took a photo of Villarruel with her phone and told him she needed to call her mother. The girl held her phone near her chest and Villarruel slapped it out of her hand and told her to swipe through her apps so he could see the phone’s contents. The frightened girl gave the money back to Villarruel, who again told her she was pretty and said, “I’ll see you next time.”

- About 20 minutes later, at 2:50 p.m., Villarruel approached another girl in the same area. He told the 14-year-old his name was John and asked her to take photos of him with his cell phone in exchange for \$40.
- Villarruel said he wanted to take more photos in a nature setting and walked with her to Kissena Park, where they went to an isolated grassy area. Villarruel exposed his penis and touched himself and asked the girl to take a photo. He also asked her to lay on top of him with her head facing down on his chest while he took a selfie. He then exposed his penis, placed the girl's hand on it and instructed her to perform a sexual act as she recorded with his phone. Villarruel also touched the girl's breast over her clothing.
- Villarruel gave her \$60 for taking the photos in the park.
- Video surveillance from the area showed Villarruel walking with both victims, who reported the incidents to family members.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Mandeep Kaur, under the supervision of Lieutenant Christopher Lippolis of the New York City Police Department's Queens Special Victims Squad.

Assistant District Attorney Kiran Cheema, of the District Attorney's Human Trafficking Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Jessica Melton, Bureau Chief, and Tara DiGregorio, Deputy Bureau Chief and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard A. Brave.

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

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