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OFFICE OF THE
ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Attorney General James Uthmeier Launches Public Assistance Fraud Task Force



Courtesy of the Office of the Attorney General

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General James Uthmeier launched the Public Assistance Fraud Task Force and appointed Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Scott Strauss as Special Prosecutor. The Task Force will provide legal counsel and streamline criminal prosecution for state agencies and law enforcement to assist in Florida’s efforts to build strong cases against fraudsters.

“We are launching this task force to bring accountability and prosecute those who are stealing from Floridians,” **said Attorney General James Uthmeier.** “Florida is not Minnesota or California, and we will safeguard the taxpayers’ investment in the services meant for the vulnerable.”

“Under the leadership of Governor DeSantis and Attorney General Uthmeier, Florida has continued to identify, address, and prevent fraud, and this multi-agency initiative creates an opportunity to collectively reaffirm that commitment as public assistance fraud becomes

increasingly more sophisticated,” **said Shevaun L. Harris, Secretary for the Agency for Health Care Administration.** “The Agency will provide any support needed to the new Statewide Prosecutor for Public Assistance Fraud to ensure these perpetrators are held accountable.”

“Floridians deserve a government that safeguards their taxpayer dollars from thieves and fraudsters,” **said Statewide Prosecutor Brad McVay.** “Taxpayer-funded benefit programs exist to support some of our most vulnerable citizens. Holding accountable those who exploit these programs is essential to protecting both public trust and the people these resources are meant to serve.”

“Committing fraud in Florida is a crime! Committing fraud against Public Assistance Programs, taking money away from those most in need, is inexcusable,” **said Florida Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner Mark Glass.** “You are stealing from children, seniors, and those who need help the most. If you choose to continue, FDLE will find you and you will be held accountable.”

“Our unit has a statutory mission to administer a statewide program and oversee provider fraud, abuse, negligence, and exploitation,” **said Medicaid Fraud Control Unit Director Kathleen Von Hoene.** “Our goal is to protect the public, preserve the integrity of the Medicaid program, and safeguard the populations it serves. I want to thank our agency and law enforcement partners for working together to expand our ability to stop these criminals.”

Florida offers public benefit programs such as Medicaid, SNAP, WIC, housing, and reemployment assistance for citizens who need help getting back on their feet. The Public Assistance Fraud Task Force will streamline investigative and prosecutorial efforts across state agencies and Florida law enforcement.

The Special Prosecutor will evaluate and oversee pending multi-circuit investigations; advise agencies on the steps necessary to develop investigations into criminal prosecutions to secure guilty verdicts at trial; assist in the drafting of warrants, affidavits, and other legal work necessary to secure evidence for pending multi-circuit investigations; secure, where necessary, the assistance of local law enforcement using constitutional and statutory authority to grant statewide jurisdiction to sworn county and municipal authorities.

Fraud and abuse of taxpayer-funded benefit programs may constitute criminal offenses ranging from misdemeanors to felonies and can result in fines, restitution, and incarceration.

Law enforcement agencies interested in participating in the Public Assistance Fraud Task Force (PAFT) should contact the Office of Statewide Prosecution at PAFT@myfloridalegal.com.

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