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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Arrest Made in Nearly \$2 Million Life Insurance Fraud Scheme



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody and Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis today announced the arrest of Joyce Small for allegedly orchestrating a life insurance fraud scheme that had the potential to defraud nearly \$2 million in death benefits from eight insurance companies. Small allegedly collected more than \$211,000 in life insurance benefits from policies fraudulently obtained by stealing personal information. Small's victims range from acquaintances, current and former rental property tenants, friends and family members—many of them now above the age of 60.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "This conniving criminal exploited relationships and the trust placed in her as a landlord to rip off insurance companies. We will not stand by while criminals target Floridians and devise schemes that ultimately harm all ratepayers when insurers have to raise rates to account for this type of fraud. I am proud of my Statewide Prosecutors for working with the CFO's office to thwart this devious insurance fraud scheme before more harm was caused by the perpetrator."

Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis said, "I'm fed up with criminals looking to take advantage of Floridians to make a quick buck, and it's especially alarming when these fraudsters target our seniors. I am committed to using every resource available to stop fraud in its tracks and put these bad actors behind bars. Our state is fighting a fraud epidemic, and these kinds of fraud schemes raise insurance rates and make it more difficult for hard working families to obtain the insurance coverage they need to protect themselves. I appreciate the dedication of my fraud

detectives and the assistance of Attorney General Ashley Moody's Office to capture this alleged fraudster and bring her to justice."

According to the investigation, between 2005 and 2018, Small allegedly obtained 33 life insurance policies on 29 individuals without the knowledge of the individuals or relatives. Small, who owns rental properties along the eastern coast of Florida from Miami Dade County to Flagler County, allegedly stole some of the victim's data through information received from the tenant's rental applications. The investigation revealed that Small strategically chose victims based on those perceived to be in poor health, aging or had little to no family members in the area. The investigation determined Small used eight different life insurance companies to secure the fraudulent life insurance policies. To date, Small received more than \$211,000 in benefits as a result of the death of five individuals she obtained policies for. If all 29 victims had passed away before law enforcement stopped the scheme, Small stood to obtain death benefits of an estimated \$1,985,000.

Authorities arrested Small on April 12, and subsequently booked Small into the Turner Guilford Knight Correctional Facility in Miami-Dade County. Small is charged with one count of insurance fraud, one count of organized scheme to defraud and five counts of grand theft. Attorney General Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution will prosecute the case in the 15th Judicial Circuit of Florida in Palm Beach County.