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OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

AG Moody Hosts COVID-19 Medicaid Frauid Symposium

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today hosted a COVID-19 related Medicaid fraud symposium with federal and state agencies. Representatives from all three of Florida's U.S. Attorney Offices, the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Health and Human Services Inspector General's Office and the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration participated in the virtual event. The discussion focused on the recent increase in Medicaid enrollment nationwide and fraud related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The group also discussed ways state and federal agencies can partner to protect taxpayer money and stop fraud and identity theft amid the current health crisis.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "My Medicaid Fraud Control Unit has been working throughout this pandemic to identify, investigate and stop fraudsters exploiting this important taxpayer-funded health care program. As a result of this health crisis and the resulting economic downturn, Florida is experiencing an increase in Medicaid enrollment. The goal of today's symposium was to bolster our individual and collective efforts to stay ahead of fraud trends related to the increased enrollment and COVID-19, and strengthen partnerships vital to upholding the integrity of the Medicaid program in Florida."

U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Florida Maria Chapa Lopez said, "Federal and state healthcare programs, such as Medicaid, are designed to assist people with limited income and resources during their time of greatest need. Criminals that target these programs or their beneficiaries during this national health crisis, or at any other time, can expect that we will join with our federal, state, and local partners to investigate and prosecute them to the fullest extent of the law. Today's symposium represents that commitment."

Special Agent in Charge Omar Pérez Aybar of HHS OIG said, "Our oversight agency is dedicated to protecting beneficiaries of Medicaid and other federal health care programs, as well as safeguarding the financial integrity of those programs. With our law enforcement partners, we are aggressively targeting COVID-19 fraud schemes, bringing fraudsters to justice and warning the public about these scams. Today's symposium demonstrates the law enforcement community's commitment to efficiently and effectively shut down fraud, waste, and abuse during this unprecedented public health crisis."

Attorney General Moody's MFCU works regularly with the state and federal agencies that participated in today's symposium to identify, investigate and prosecute Medicaid fraud cases. During the event, the participants discussed the increase in Medicaid enrollment and the opportunity the increase could create for criminals to exploit the government program to steal taxpayer money. The group also discussed ways to detect and prevent identity theft related to Medicaid and the pandemic, as well as fraud schemes designed to steal stimulus payments.

Earlier this year, Attorney General Moody issued a Consumer Alert warning Floridians about long-term care facilities seizing the stimulus payments of residents in the Medicaid program. To view the alert, click here.

Additionally, health care providers must remember to not seek payment from Medicaid recipients for co-payments, co-insurance, deductibles, or other cost-sharing during the declared state of emergency. On March 16, Florida Medicaid waived co-payment requirements for all services. Florida Medicaid also indicated it will pay for medically necessary services provided to Medicaid recipients diagnosed with COVID-19, regardless of whether the provider is located in-state or out-of-state.

For more on COVID-19 related Medicaid fraud, click here.

Since Attorney General Moody took office in January 2019, MFCU has secured more than $54 million in settlements and judgments as a direct result of actions brought by the office. MFCU also conducted investigations leading to the arrests of nearly 90 individuals charged with Medicaid fraud.

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The Florida Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit investigates and prosecutes providers that intentionally defraud the state's Medicaid program through fraudulent billing practices. Medicaid fraud essentially steals from Florida's taxpayers. From January 2019 to the present, Attorney General Moody's MFCU has obtained more than $54 million in settlements and judgments. Additionally, the MFCU investigates allegations of patient abuse, neglect and exploitation in facilities receiving payments under the Medicaid program.