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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Tip to AG's Senior Protection Team Leads to Arrests



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody's Senior Protection Team, Office of Statewide Prosecution and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement today announced two arrests in a case involving the exploitation of a Florida senior. Authorities arrested Audrey Cody and Cody's adult daughter, Deanna Baptiste, on charges of exploitation of elderly persons, organized scheme to defraud and mortgage fraud as the result of an elder exploitation investigation. The investigation began following a tip to Attorney General Moody's SPT hotline.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "My office is committed to protecting seniors, working with our partners to bring to justice those taking advantage of older Floridians. The defendants in this case exploited a Florida senior—stealing more than $100,000 from his retirement accounts, life insurance policy and other investments. I want to thank the citizen who reported these crimes to my Senior Protection Team, FDLE for its diligent efforts to investigate the exploitation and my Statewide Prosecutors for doggedly pursuing these charges."

FDLE Commissioner Rick Swearingen said, "I'd like to commend the tremendous work by our members and by our partners at the Office of Statewide Prosecution and the Senior Protection Team in bringing these defendants to justice. Let these arrests serve as a warning to those who would prey on Florida's seniors that we are vigilant and tireless in protecting our citizens."

The tip leading to the arrests came to Attorney General Moody's SPT just days after the announcement of the new senior fraud fighting unit. The Team took the tip to OSP and FDLE, launching a year-long investigation that uncovered Baptiste and Cody's ongoing scheme to exploit a Florida senior.

As part of the scheme, the mother-daughter duo worked to gain the trust of the victim. Soon, after being introduced, Baptiste moved into the victim's home in Plantation and promised to provide caretaker services. Baptiste also promised to oversee the maintenance of the victim's property while the victim sought treatment more than three hours away in Tampa. According to the investigation, between November 2017 and March 2019, Baptiste and Cody defrauded and exploited the victim by unlawfully cashing out his pension, retirement account and life insurance policy. The defendants also opened credit cards in the victim’s name, transferred the deed of his home to a limited liability corporation controlled by the defendants and then took out a mortgage on the property.

The defendants utilized the stolen funds, more than $100,000 in total, for personal expenses, such as trips, paying the bills of friends and family, and giving gifts. The investigation revealed that Baptiste even used ill-gotten funds to pay for an online dating service. Both defendants face numerous felony charges, carrying up to a maximum penalty of 125 years in prison.

Attorney General Moody's Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Elisabeth Rodriguez will prosecute the case. If you or someone you know is the victim of elder exploitation, please report the crime to local law enforcement and the Florida Abuse Hotline, by calling 1(800) 962-2873 or report online at ReportAbuse.dcf.state.fl.us. Complaints can also be submitted to the Attorney General's SPT, by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or by visiting MyFloridaLegal.com. For more information, visit MyFloridaLegal.com/SeniorProtection.

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The primary focus of the Florida Attorney General’s Senior Protection Team is pursuing senior fraud within the OAG’s civil and criminal enforcement jurisdiction. For elder exploitation issues, typically within the jurisdiction and expertise of local law enforcement or other state agencies, like the Florida Department of Children and Families, the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, or the Department of Financial Services, those agencies should be contacted directly.