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OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

MFCU Arrests 19 in Regional Takedown



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today announced the completion of a statewide Medicaid fraud takedown. The Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit executed 19 arrests for fraudulently billing Medicaid more than a million dollars. The arrests culminated from 14 different cases covering a wide range of charges, including: aggravated identity theft, conspiracy to commit health care fraud, exploitation involving an elderly person, false statements in connection with a health care matter, practicing as a health care professional without a valid license and more.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Fraud of any kind will not be tolerated in Florida. I am proud of the hard work of my MFCU and law enforcement partners in bringing these 19 individuals to justice. It is sickening to read these stories about how individuals will use and abuse those under their care. This kind of fraud and abuse not only hurts the direct victims, but it also drives up medical costs for everyone."

Authorities arrested the following individuals in this sweep:

- ○ · Johana Medina-Acosta, 30, Hillsborough County;
  · Ashley Albani, 31, Orange County;
  · Liana Alvarez, 38, Miami-Dade County;
  · Katera Armwood, 40, Hillsborough County;
  · Dr. Ignacio Baez, 67, Orange County;
  · James Daniels, 59, Suwannee County;
  · Stephanie Fleming, 42, Waldorf, MD (formerly Leon County);
  · Sasha Gaffney, 48, Hillsborough County;

· Wilma Garcia, 58, Orange County;
· Dustin Gollopp, 48, Miami-Dade County;
· Eliecer Hernandez, 47, Miami-Dade County;
· Marie Isaac, 23, Indian River County;
· Laverne Johnson, 63, Suwannee County;
· Lakeena McGee, 44, Hillsborough County;
· Ronald Moreno, 41, Hillsborough County;
· Francine Nipper, 56, Manatee County;
· Jephete Saint Phillipp, 33, Palm Beach County;
· Helen Storey, 37, Waldorf, MD (formerly Leon County); and
· Victoria Wickes, 51, Hillsborough County

For more information on these individual cases, click here.

The Regional Takedown is in coordination with various federal and state law enforcement partners, including the Department of Justice Criminal Division's Fraud Section, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Inspector General, and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

The following local law enforcement agencies assisted in these arrests: the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, the Indian River County Sheriff's Office, the Manatee County Sheriff's Office, the Miami Gardens Police Department, the Lee County Sheriff's Office, the Miami Dade Police Department, the Orange County Sheriff's Office, the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, the Suwannee County Sheriff's Office, the Tampa Police Department and law enforcement officials in Maryland.

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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. Additionally, the MFCU investigates allegations of patient abuse, neglect, and exploitation in facilities receiving payments under the Medicaid program.