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Contact Kylie Mason

Phone (850) 245-0150



OFFICE OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL
ASHLEY MOODY
— Stronger, Safer Florida —

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Attorney General Moody Announces Arrest of Two Seminole County Residents for Medicaid Fraud



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, with the assistance of the Oviedo Police Department, Seminole County Sheriff’s Office, Orlando Police Department and the United States Customs and Border Protection, today announced the arrest of Debora Behnke and Suman Bhattacharjee for a Medicaid fraud scheme that stole hundreds of thousands of dollars. Behnke and Bhattacharjee ran Pioneer Medical Transportation LLC and submitted fraudulent claims for nonemergency medical transportation for Medicaid recipients, stealing more than \$250,000 from the Medicaid program.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “Conspiring together, these individuals defrauded Medicaid out of more than \$250,000. Instead of transporting vulnerable Medicaid recipients, these individuals falsely billed the taxpayer-funded program for services never completed. In some instances, they even convinced patients to move across the state—with no regard for the best interest of the patients—and still charged Medicaid for transporting them from the original, longer distance. Thanks to our Medicaid Fraud Control Unit working with local law enforcement partners, this fraudulent scheme is now at a dead end.”

According to an MFCU investigation, Behnke and Bhattacharjee regularly billed for trips that did not take place. Additionally, Behnke and Bhattacharjee's scheme involved signing up vulnerable Medicaid recipients for daily trips across the state in exchange for small but regular payments with no regard for the best interest of the recipient. Behnke and Bhattacharjee then encouraged the recipients to move from coastal-area homes to the Orlando and Kissimmee regions. Pioneer Medical Transportation then billed for the original, longer round trips and at a greater frequency than provided in order to maximize profits.

Behnke and Bhattacharjee each face one count of Medicaid provider fraud and one count of scheme to defraud, both first-degree felonies.

The State Attorney's Office in the 18th Judicial Circuit will prosecute this case.

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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.

The Florida MFCU is funded through a grant totaling \$29,707,695 for Federal Fiscal Year 2024, from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services-Office of Inspector General. The Federal Share of these funds is 75% totaling \$22,280,772. The State Matching Share of these funds is 25% totaling \$7,426,923 and is funded by Florida.