



PRESS RELEASE

Frostburg Woman, Sister Plead Guilty to \$825,000 Medicaid Fraud *Rebecca D. Norris Orchestrated Long-Running Scheme in Western Maryland*

BALTIMORE, MD (July 10, 2018) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh today announced that Rebecca D. Norris, 43, of Frostburg, pleaded guilty to one count of Felony Medicaid Fraud for masterminding a series of fraudulent schemes at two western Maryland clinics she owned, resulting in a \$825,000 loss to the Maryland Medicaid program. Norris’s sister, Heidi M. Wiley, 32, also pleaded guilty to one count of Felony Medicaid Fraud for her role as a biller in Norris’ schemes. Both women will be sentenced by a Baltimore City Circuit Court judge on September 24, 2018.

According to information presented in court, Norris owned the Appalachian Wellness Centers in Cumberland and Westernport, which provided mental health, primary care and medication management services to individuals in Allegheny County and surrounding areas. Beginning in 2010, Norris either participated in or directed the following schemes:

- Norris’ Westernport clinic used out-of-state counselors to provide patients therapy via video conferencing despite lacking state approval for video therapy, and deceived Medicaid by billing \$667,000 for face-to-face services;
- Norris appropriated the identity of a psychologist to bill Medicaid \$104,000 for care provided by improperly credentialed therapists;
- Norris and her staff billed Medicaid nearly \$49,000 for care purportedly provided to their family members when no such care was provided;
- Norris directed her staff to bill Medicaid over \$5,000 for patients that never showed up for appointments; and,
- Norris acted as a therapist for two children despite lacking necessary medical credentials, and mistakenly prescribed them high doses of psychotropic drugs, costing the Medicaid program approximately \$2,500. The children were prevented from harm by alert state regulators who declined to authorize the improper dosages.

“This fraudulent scheme resulted in hundreds of thousands of dollars stolen from the Maryland Medicaid program,” said Attorney General Frosh. “In addition to the theft, Norris endangered the health and welfare of patients who deserved high quality care.”

Norris used a series of financial incentives to induce Wiley and other unindicted co-conspirators to assist her in these fraudulent schemes, including paying commissions for billing services to Medicaid. She also directed her staff to conceal the fraud during a visit from state auditors by

altering and doctoring patient records. Norris deposited the fraudulent proceeds into her personal bank account and used them to fund her lifestyle.

Medicaid Fraud is a felony punishable by up to five years' incarceration and/or a \$100,000 fine.

In making today's announcement, Attorney General Frosh thanked the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit of the Attorney General's Office, specifically Assistant Attorneys General Raja Mishra and Catherine Schuster Pascale, Investigators Julia Foster and Prashani Mankhusu, Auditor Todd Sheffer, and paralegal Harouna Boncana. Attorney General Frosh also thanked the Maryland Department of Health, Office of the Inspector General, the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, Allegany County law enforcement, and the Maryland State Police for their assistance.