



ANTHONY G. BROWN, MARYLAND ATTORNEY GENERAL

PRESS RELEASE

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Media Contacts:
press@oag.state.md.us
410-576-7009

Caretaker Sentenced in Case of First-Degree Assault and Vulnerable Adult Abuse

BALTIMORE, MD (September 19, 2023) – Maryland Attorney General Anthony G. Brown today announced the plea and sentencing of Obiageriaku Iheanacho, 36, of Baltimore, for the death of 75-year-old Ellsworth Johnson-Bey. Iheanacho pleaded guilty to first degree assault and abuse of a vulnerable adult in the first degree for her role in the assault and subsequent death of Mr. Johnson-Bey. Baltimore City Circuit Court Judge Jennifer Schiffer sentenced Iheanacho to 25 years of incarceration, with all but seven years suspended. Upon her release, Iheanacho will be placed on five years of supervised probation during which she will be prohibited from caring for vulnerable adults.

Iheanacho was an agency Geriatric Nursing Assistant (GNA) assigned to Autumn Lake Health Care Post Acute Care Center in Baltimore City when she was captured on video pushing Mr. Johnson-Bey, a dementia patient, to the ground on May 15, 2022. Mr. Johnson-Bey was taken to Johns Hopkins Hospital, where he was diagnosed with a left hip fracture. He was treated at the hospital and returned to the facility a few weeks later. Although attempts were made at physical therapy, Mr. Johnson-Bey never got out of bed again. He eventually contracted pneumonia, developed blood clots in his lungs due to his inactivity, and was diagnosed with COVID-19. Mr. Johnson-Bey passed away at a local hospital on September 5, 2022. Iheanacho was later charged on January 19, 2023, by the Baltimore City Police Department.

“Mr. Johnson-Bey’s death was incredibly tragic,” said Attorney General Brown. “As always, our thoughts are with his surviving relatives who continue to suffer the heartbreaking loss of their loved one. Although the events leading up to Mr. Johnson-Bey’s death can never be undone, it is our hope that the defendant’s plea and sentencing in this case will bring some closure to those grieving.”

This case was investigated by Baltimore City Police Department and the Attorney General’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU), which has the authority to investigate and prosecute vulnerable adult abuse and neglect by healthcare providers in Maryland.

In making today’s announcement, Attorney General Brown thanked Assistant Attorney General and Deputy Director of the MFCU Lisa Marts and Assistant Attorney General and MFCU

Director Zak Shirley who prosecuted this case. Attorney General Brown also thanked the Baltimore Police Department for their assistance in this investigation and prosecution.

The Medicaid Fraud Control Unit in the Maryland Office of the Attorney General receives 75 percent of its funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under a grant award totaling \$4,908,456 for Federal fiscal year (FY) 2023. The remaining 25 percent, totaling \$1,636,148 for FY 2023, is funded by the State of Maryland.

<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2023/091923.pdf>