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PRESS RELEASE

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Attorney General’s Medicaid Fraud and Vulnerable Victims Unit Takes Historic Action Securing Corporate Oversight of an Ellicott City Nursing Home and \$400,000 Settlement

BALTIMORE, MD (June 14, 2024) – Attorney General Anthony G. Brown today announced that Ohio-based nursing home chain CommuniCare Family of Companies will pay \$400,000 and one of their Maryland nursing homes will be subject to independent oversight for three years. This arrangement, the result of an extensive investigation by the Office of Attorney General’s Medicaid Fraud and Vulnerable Victims Unit (MFVVU), addresses allegations that the company violated the Maryland False Health Claims Act by providing substandard care to hundreds of residents at the *Ellicott City Healthcare Center*, a nursing home in Ellicott City, Maryland.

The [settlement](#) includes a monitoring agreement under which the Office of Attorney General will now oversee the facility for three years using an outside expert monitoring company paid for by CommuniCare. The settlement marks the first time in Maryland history that the state’s fraud statute has been used to address broad deficiencies in care at a Maryland nursing home, and the first time that OAG has imposed a monitoring agreement on a nursing home.

“Today marks a new era in my office’s fight for the rights of vulnerable Marylanders,” said Attorney General Anthony Brown. “It will no longer be enough for long-term care facilities to pay for the harm they’ve caused. They must commit to making improvements and providing the care that residents deserve. We will be watching.”

The facility came to the office’s attention in 2019 after the Maryland Office of Healthcare Quality conducted an inspection and found an unusually large number of problems. The subsequent, years-long investigation by the Office of Attorney General’s MFVVU found that:

- More than a quarter of the day- and night-shifts were understaffed, both in terms of nurses working per shift and staff-hours-per-bed ratios, which was in violation of state regulatory requirements;

- There were 105 falls and 86 serious wound incidents requiring emergency care;
- There were 29 serious regulatory violations compromising patient care, including patients wandering away from the facility, medication errors, compromised hygiene, and unwitnessed falls and injuries; and
- A review of patient records found failures to manage fall risks, unwitnessed falls, nutritional declines, and failures to address missing medical information.

The Office of Attorney General determined that these shortcomings meant that the Medicaid recipients residing at the Ellicott City facility were receiving such substandard care that taxpayers, who paid for the care through the Medicaid program, were being defrauded.

Given the broad array of deficiencies and to ensure that care at the facility improves, MFVVU employed the use of a monitoring agreement in addition to the \$400,000 monetary settlement. The monitoring agreement allows the state to monitor every relevant facet of the facility's day-to-day operations on a regular basis through outside audits and unrestricted access to facility staff, corporate documents, and medical files. If continuing problems are uncovered, the facility must make improvements or risk additional legal action.

Today's announcement falls on the eve of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), which is Saturday, June 15, 2024. The day is focused on raising awareness of the abuse and neglect that adults aged 60 years and older can experience. The Office of the Attorney General is committed to protecting our state's most vulnerable populations. If you suspect the abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult, you can contact the MFVVU at 410-576-6521 or by emailing MedicaidFraud@oag.state.md.us. Finally, you can also report anonymously using this form: <https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/MFCU/default.aspx>.

This case was investigated by the Medicaid Fraud and Vulnerable Victims Unit of the Attorney General's Office. Attorney General Brown thanked Assistant Attorney General Raja Mishra, Investigators Dennis Gunther and Prashani Mankhusu, and Nurse Analyst Yvette Finney for their work on the case.

The Maryland Office of the Attorney General, Medicaid Fraud and Vulnerable Victims Unit receives 75 percent of its funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under a grant award totaling \$6,057,128 for Federal fiscal year (FY) 2024. The remaining 25 percent, totaling \$2,019,042 for FY 2024, is funded by the State of Maryland.

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