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PRESS RELEASE

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Parkville Woman Pleads Guilty to Over \$3.6 Million in Medicaid Fraud

BALTIMORE, MD (March 4, 2025) – Attorney General Anthony G. Brown today announced that Tasha S. Saunders, 44, of Parkville, Maryland, pleaded guilty to two counts of defrauding the Maryland Medicaid program of more than \$3.6 million by billing for mental health services for Medicaid recipients that were never provided.

Between November 2019 and September 2024, Saunders operated two behavioral health companies that submitted fraudulent claims for Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program (PRP) services, causing Maryland Medicaid to reimburse \$3,672,958.66 for services that were not provided. PRP is an accreditation-based program administered through the Behavioral Health Administration of the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) that provides community-based comprehensive rehabilitation and recovery services for individuals suffering from serious mental health conditions. Saunders defrauded Medicaid by forging signatures, composing fake patient records, and stealing the identities of unwitting healthcare providers and Medicaid recipients alike.

“This outrageous conduct is an insult to the one in five Marylanders who rely on Medicaid for health coverage. These crimes harm our State’s neediest residents and the health providers who care for them,” **said Attorney General Brown.** “We will defend the funding of this critical program that allows people to live full, healthy lives.”

This is not Saunder’s first Medicaid fraud conviction. On May 28, 2021, she pleaded guilty to a single count of Felony Medicaid Fraud based on her operation of two different mental health companies. As part of her plea in the prior case, Saunders admitted to creating fake patient files, stealing the identities of licensed counselors, and submitting fraudulent claims to Medicaid for PRP services that had not been provided. Saunders was sentenced to nine months’ incarceration,

followed by nine months' home detention, five years of supervised probation, and ordered to pay restitution of \$470,744.67.

As a result of this conviction, on June 20, 2022, Saunders was placed on the Health and Human Services-Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG) Exclusion List. HHS-OIG has the authority to exclude individuals and entities from working for or receiving payment from federal healthcare programs for conviction of a criminal offense related to the delivery of an item or service under any State healthcare program, among other reasons. Medicaid is a federally-funded healthcare program. Because of Saunders' status on the Exclusion List, she lied on her Medicaid provider application to hide her affiliation with the new companies she was creating. Saunders then replicated her fraud scheme with her new PRPs, using forgery and identity theft to perpetuate the same type of fraud scheme.

During the investigation, the state executed nearly a dozen search warrants for email records, cloud storage accounts, and cell phones. Those records revealed a sophisticated system for generating fake patient records that were a prerequisite to billing Maryland Medicaid. The state also interviewed numerous Medicaid recipients who had no familiarity with the companies Saunders operated or the services billed under their names. In order to facilitate the fraud-scheme, Saunders stole the identities of legitimate mental health providers, including the identities of faculty members at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. Using recipients' and providers' names without their permission or knowledge, she directed the creation of fake referrals for services and fake rehabilitation plans for each recipient billed. Those documents were submitted to the Maryland Department of Health in order to gain authorization to bill for PRP services that also never occurred.

Saunders pleaded guilty on February 25, 2025, and is scheduled to be sentenced on July 21, 2025.

In making today's announcement, Attorney General Brown thanked Medicaid Fraud and Vulnerable Victims Unit Chief Zak Shirley, Assistant Attorneys General James M.C. McHale and Catherine Schuster Pascale, Senior Fraud Analyst Paul Kidd, Fraud Analyst Laura Webber, and Senior Investigative Auditor Todd Sheffer for their work on this case. Attorney General Brown also thanked the Office of Inspector General, Health and Human Services Special Agent in Charge Maureen Dixon, Assistant Special Agent in Charge Andre Jacobs, and Special Agent Matt Gray and the Maryland State Police.

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 \$6,845,828 for Federal fiscal year (FY) 2025. The remaining 25 percent, totaling \$2,281,939 for FY 2025, is funded by the State of Maryland.

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