



U.S. Department of Justice

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PRESS RELEASE

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Maryland Woman Pleads Guilty to Health Care Fraud Government Continues Crackdown on People Who Defraud Medicaid

WASHINGTON – Charlotte Besumbu Etongwe, 45, of Beltsville, Maryland, pled guilty today in federal court to defrauding the D.C. Medicaid program out of more than a quarter million dollars.

The announcement was made by Acting U.S. Attorney Michael R. Sherwin; James A. Dawson, Special Agent in Charge, FBI Washington Field Office, Criminal Division; Maureen R. Dixon, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Inspector General for the region that includes Washington, D.C.; and Daniel W. Lucas, Inspector General for the District of Columbia.

Etongwe pled guilty to health care fraud in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The charge carries a statutory maximum of 10 years in prison and potential financial penalties. Under federal sentencing guidelines, Etongwe faces a likely recommended sentence of between 18 and 24 months in prison and a fine of up to \$75,000. The Honorable Tanya S. Chutkan took the plea and scheduled sentencing for December 7, 2020.

According to a statement of offense submitted to the Court, Etongwe worked as a personal care aide for eleven different home health agencies at various times between July 2014 and March 2019. The home health agencies employed Etongwe to assist D.C. Medicaid beneficiaries in performing activities of daily living, such as getting in and out of bed, bathing, dressing, and eating. Etongwe was supposed to document the care she provided to the Medicaid beneficiaries on timesheets and then submit the timesheets to the home health agencies, which would in turn bill Medicaid for the services that she rendered.

Between 2014 and 2019, Etongwe caused the D.C. Medicaid Program to issue payments totaling \$369,970 for services that she did not render. As part of her fraud scheme, she submitted false timesheets to different home health agencies claiming that she provided 22 hours or more of personal care aide services. She also submitted false timesheets claiming to have provided personal care aide services to multiple Medicaid beneficiaries in overlapping hours.

The FBI, the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Inspector General, the District of Columbia's Office of the Inspector General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, and the U.S. Attorney's Office are committed to investigating and prosecuting individuals who defraud the D.C. Medicaid program. Since October 2019, five former personal care aides have been sentenced in U.S. District Court for defrauding D.C. Medicaid. In June 2020, four additional individuals were charged in criminal complaints with health care fraud and health care false statements.

The government counts on the public for tips and assistance in helping stop health care fraud. If you have information about individuals committing health care fraud, please call the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Inspector General hotline at (800) HHS-TIPS [(800) 447-8477].

Assistant U.S. Attorney Kondi Kleinman of the Fraud Section is prosecuting the case.

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