

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Former Nursing Home Employee and Home Health Aide Arrested in Two Separate Cases Involving Financial Exploitation of Elderly and Vulnerable Adults**

WASHINGTON – Valerie Nicole Williams, 31, was arrested on March 22, 2021 and charged via criminal complaint with felony Financial Exploitation of an Elderly Person and Financial Exploitation of a Vulnerable Adult, in violation of D.C. Code § 22-933.01. On March 23, 2021, Mechille R. Akinkuotu (a.k.a. Mechille R. Tate), 53, was arrested and charged via criminal complaint with felony Financial Exploitation of an Elderly Person, in violation of the same code provision.

The announcement was made by Acting U.S. Attorney Channing D. Phillips; Karl Racine, Attorney General for the District of Columbia; and Daniel W. Lucas, Inspector General for the District of Columbia.

According to Court records, Williams was the Business Officer Coordinator at Transitions Healthcare Capital City, a skilled nursing facility in the District. Between October 2018 and August 2019, she used her position to steal \$7,421 from seven elderly residents and four vulnerable adult residents at the facility. Williams forged the signatures of these residents to withdraw funds from the residents' accounts managed by the facility. In two instances she also redirected money orders intended for residents into her own account.

Also according to Court records, Akinkuotu was the home health aide for an elderly man with limited mobility. Between January and April 2020, she stole \$8,076.78 from the victim by using his debit card for unauthorized transactions including purchases at Target, Mary Kaye Cosmetics, and nail salons, as well as ATM withdrawals. Status hearings for both Williams and Akinkuotu have been scheduled for late August 2021.

A criminal complaint is merely an allegation, and every defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

In announcing the relevant charges on March 22 and 23 2021, Acting U.S. Attorney Phillips, Attorney General Racine, and Inspector General Lucas commended the work of those who investigated the cases from the District of Columbia's Office of the Attorney General and Office of the Inspector General. They also cited the efforts of Special Assistant United States Attorney Jennifer C. Mika, on detail from the Office of the Attorney General to handle financial crimes cases involving elderly victims, who investigated and is prosecuting both cases for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia.

This prosecution is part of the Office's wider efforts to combat crimes against seniors and vulnerable adults. In 2018, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia and the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia simultaneously launched initiatives to address the abuse and exploitation of older adults. The Elder Abuse and Financial Exploitation Initiative at the U.S. Attorney's Office expanded its response to criminal and civil violations targeting older adults. The initiative has enabled the U.S. Attorney's Office to develop and coordinate further its prosecution of these cases and enhance its overall support of older or vulnerable victims. The team consists of experienced prosecutors and victim advocates from across the Office, to include the Superior Court, Criminal, and Civil Divisions, as well as the Victim Witness Assistance Unit. This prosecution is indicative of the continued collaboration between the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Office of the Attorney General to prosecute cases of this kind.

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