



U.S. Department of Justice

Ronald C. Machen Jr.
*United States Attorney for the
District of Columbia*
Judiciary Center
555 Fourth St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

PRESS RELEASE

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For Information Contact:

Public Affairs

(202) 252-6933

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Owner of Three Home Health Care Agencies Indicted On New Charges in Investigation of Medicaid Fraud **Defendant Was Among Those Arrested Earlier This Year** **In Largest Health Care Fraud Takedown in D.C. History**

WASHINGTON –Florence Bikundi, the owner of three home care agencies, has been charged in a superseding indictment with six additional offenses related to a scheme to secure more than \$75 million in District of Columbia Medicaid payments, even though she was barred from participating in any federal health care programs. The new charges include allegations that Bikundi and others conspired to bill the Medicaid program for services that were not provided.

Bikundi, 51, of Bowie, Md., has been in custody since her arrest in February 2014, following her indictment on one count of health care fraud, one count of Medicaid fraud, four counts of money laundering, and three counts of engaging in illegal monetary transactions. The superseding indictment, returned by a grand jury on Dec. 18, 2014, and unsealed today, includes those nine charges and adds six additional offenses against her, including one count of health care fraud; one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud; one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering, and three additional counts of money laundering.

The superseding indictment charges eight other people with taking part in the fraudulent activities, including Bikundi's husband, son, and two sisters.

The charges were announced by Ronald C. Machen Jr., U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia; Andrew G. McCabe, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office; Nicholas DiGiulio, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG), for the region that includes Washington, D.C.; Kathy A. Michalko, Special Agent in Charge, Washington Field Office, U.S. Secret Service; Thomas J. Kelly, Special Agent in Charge of the Washington Field Office of the

Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI), and Daniel W. Lucas, Inspector General for the District of Columbia.

Bikundi, also known as Florence Ngwe and Florence Igwacho, is pending trial before the Honorable Beryl A. Howell in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

Bikundi was among more than 20 people charged in February 2014 following a wide-ranging investigation that uncovered numerous, separate schemes involving fraud, kickbacks, and false billings in the growing field of home care services for D.C. Medicaid beneficiaries. The case so far has generated 16 guilty pleas in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia and the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. Those pleading guilty include people who worked as personal care aides in the home care industry, patient recruiters who demanded money for access to Medicaid beneficiaries, and others.

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“This indictment charges Florence Bikundi and eight others with a conspiracy to defraud Medicaid through cash kickbacks, bogus paperwork, and services that were never provided,” said U.S. Attorney Machen. “We are seeking the forfeiture of \$75 million in ill-gotten gains, including jewelry, luxury vehicles, and money stashed in dozens of accounts. This indictment is part of a broader crackdown on health care fraud that has resulted in 16 guilty pleas to date. These prosecutions demonstrate our commitment to defending the integrity of a program that serves the most vulnerable members of our community. We will continue to fight to protect taxpayer dollars and conserve resources for those truly in need.”

“The additional charges announced today outline that the owner and eight employees of a home health care company never provided services to residents who were part of the D.C. Medicaid program,” said Assistant Director in Charge McCabe. “This fraud steals from government programs designed to assist deserving patients. The FBI, with our partners at HHS-OIG, U.S. Secret Service, IRS, and D.C. OIG, will continue to investigate the exploitation of our health care system.”

“Our success in this case and similar investigations is a result of our close work with law enforcement partners,” said Special Agent in Charge Michalko. “The Secret Service worked closely with the FBI, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and a variety of other federal and state partners to share information and resources that ultimately led to the indictment of Florence Bikundi. This case demonstrates there is no such thing as anonymity for those engaging in health care fraud and illegal schemes.”

“Health care fraud schemes are complex and involve intense focus on many details, especially when so many wrongdoers are working together to commit fraud,” said Inspector General Lucas. “This scheme perpetuated against the District’s Medicaid program is no different. It is because of our concentrated efforts, working with other law enforcement entities, that we were able to continue the work necessary to bring this superseding indictment. We will continue those efforts after today.”

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Medicaid provides for home care services to be performed by personal care aides, working for eligible home care agencies. The aides assist Medicaid beneficiaries in performing activities of daily living, such as getting in and out of bed, bathing, dressing, keeping track of medication, and so forth. In order to be covered for such benefits, the beneficiaries must get a doctor's prescription.

According to the superseding indictment, Bikundi owns two entities named Global Healthcare, Inc., and one named Flo-Diamond Inc. In April 2000, according to the indictment, HHS-OIG notified Bikundi in writing that she was excluded from participation in Medicare, Medicaid, and all federal health care programs. This notice was based on the revocation the previous year of Bikundi's nursing license in Virginia. The exclusion was issued against Bikundi under her name of Florence Igwacho. Bikundi subsequently concealed her past when she secured Medicaid provider numbers for her businesses using the name of Florence Bikundi, the indictment alleges. She also did not disclose that her nursing licenses were revoked in Virginia, South Carolina and the District of Columbia, the indictment alleges.

In violation of the terms of her exclusion, between July 2007 and early 2014, according to the indictment, Bikundi's entities received more than \$78 million in payments from Medicaid; of this, \$75 million came from the District of Columbia program and the rest from Maryland.

The new charges against Bikundi include allegations that she also participated in a wide-ranging scheme to defraud the Medicaid program by billing the program for services that were not provided. The indictment alleges that cash payments were made by employees of Bikundi's companies to Medicaid beneficiaries in exchange for signatures falsely stating that services had been provided. According to the superseding indictment, Bikundi and employees of her companies also falsified patient files and employee files to make it appear as though the claims for payment were legitimate when they were not.

The superseding indictment also alleges that Bikundi and her husband, Michael D. Bikundi, Sr., 52, conspired to launder the proceeds of the illegally obtained Medicaid funds and committed substantive money laundering violations.

In addition to Michael Bikundi, Sr., seven others were charged with health-care related offenses in the superseding indictment. All are employees and administrators of Bikundi's company. They include three other relatives: Florence Bikundi's son, Carlson M. Igwacho, 33, and two sisters, Irene M. Igwacho, 49, and Berenice W. Igwacho, 30, all of Bowie, Md.

Others charged include Christian S. Asongcha, 38, of Lanham, Md.; Elvis N. Atabe, 55, of Adelphi, Md.; Atawan Mundu John, 37, of Laurel, Md., and Melissa A. Williams, 31, of Bowie, Md. The indictment alleges that Melissa A. Williams and Atawan Mundu John tampered with witnesses during the law enforcement investigation of health care fraud.

The United States has seized over \$11 million in funds and five luxury vehicles from Florence Bikundi and Michael Bikundi. The superseding indictment seeks a forfeiture money

judgment of \$75 million against the Bikundis and the forfeiture of the funds, vehicles, and the Bikundi residence.

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The various investigations were conducted by the FBI's Washington Field Office; the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General; the U.S. Secret Service; the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit of the District of Columbia's Office of the Inspector General; the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation; the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI); the Office of Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigations, Office of Inspector General, Department of Labor; the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General, and the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit of the Maryland Attorney General's Office. Assistance was provided by the District of Columbia's Department of Health Care Finance and other agencies.

The FBI has set up a hotline number to report suspected incidents of Medicaid fraud: 855-281-1242. People can also provide information by e-mail to HealthCareFraud@ic.fbi.gov.

HHS-OIG also has a hotline that can be reached at 800-HHS-TIPS or by clicking the "Report Fraud" tab on the agency's website: <http://oig.hhs.gov>

These cases are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Lionel André, Anthony Saler, Ted Radway, Michael Friedman, and Michelle Zamarin.

Assistance was provided by Forensic Accountant Maria Boodoo; Paralegal Specialists Toni Donato, Donna Galindo, Krishawn Graham, Tasha Harris, and Corinne Kleinman; Legal Assistants Angela Lawrence, Jessica McCormick, and Christopher Samson; Litigation Support Specialist Ron Royal, and Criminal Investigator Nicole Hinson, all of the U.S. Attorney's Office.

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