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PRESS RELEASE

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Licensed Attorney Sentenced to Prison For Defrauding Medicaid In Scheme Involving Personal Care Services Defendant Admitted Submitting False Timesheets Over Two-Year Period

WASHINGTON – Susan Engonwei Tingwei, 44, of Silver Spring, Md., a licensed attorney, was sentenced today to 10 months in prison for defrauding the D.C. Medicaid program out of more than \$100,000 in a scheme involving false claims about personal care services.

The announcement was made by U.S. Attorney Matthew M. Graves, Wayne A. Jacobs, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Washington Field Office's 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.

Tingwei pleaded guilty in November 2021, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, to health care fraud. She was sentenced by the Honorable Carl J. Nichols. Following her prison term, she will be placed on two years of supervised release. She also must pay \$131,656 in restitution and an identical amount in a forfeiture money judgment.

In court documents, Tingwei admitted that at various times between 2016 and 2018, she was employed by two different home health agencies in the District of Columbia. The home health agencies employed her to assist D.C. Medicaid beneficiaries in performing activities of daily living, such as getting in and out of bed, bathing, dressing, and eating.

Tingwei was supposed to document the care that she provided to 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. As part of her guilty plea, Tingwei admitted that she submitted false timesheets claiming to provide services that she did not actually render.

Tingwei earned her Master of Laws degree from the University of Maryland in May 2017. She was admitted to the New York state bar in February 2018 and the Maryland state bar in January 2020.

On 118 occasions between August 2016 and May 2017, Tingwei submitted timesheets claiming that she worked as a personal care aide in Washington, D.C., during the same hours when she either was scheduled to attend law school classes in Baltimore, or when she should have been traveling to or from Baltimore related to her law school program. For example, Tingwei submitted timesheets claiming that she provided services to two beneficiaries on April 13, 2017, one from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., and the other from 3:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Records show Tingwei's key card swiping in at the University of Maryland's law school campus at 5:30 p.m. and swiping out at 9:29 p.m. Cell phone records also showed her cell phone being in Baltimore between 8:03 a.m. and 9:31 p.m. that day.

Tingwei admitted that her fraud scheme began no later than August 2016 and continued through September 2018. She acknowledged successfully defrauding the D.C. Medicaid program out of \$131,656.

The FBI, the U.S. 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 August 2018, 11 former personal care aides have pleaded guilty to defrauding Medicaid in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Six of those aides were sentenced to 13 months in prison; a seventh was sentenced to serve 15 months.

The government urges the public to provide tips and assistance to 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] or the D.C. Office of the Inspector General at (800) 724-TIPS [(800) 274-8477].

This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Kondi Kleinman and former Assistant U.S. Attorney Denise Simmonds, with assistance from Paralegal Specialist Michon Tart and former Paralegal Specialists Angeline Thekkumthala and Brittany Phillips.