

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Southern District of Mississippi

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, April 18, 2022

Columbia Woman Sentenced to 57 Months in Prison for Health Care Fraud

Hattiesburg, Miss. – A Columbia, Mississippi woman was sentenced to 57 months in prison for defrauding health care insurance providers.

Joy Beth Harden, 51, pled guilty on August 10, 2021, to executing a scheme to defraud Medicare and other health care benefit programs. Specifically, Harden submitted fraudulent bills for durable medical equipment on behalf of her business, BZB LLC doing business as Duracare Home Medical Equipment in the Hattiesburg area. As a result, Medicare and other benefits programs paid Harden for durable medical equipment that was never prescribed for patients and for medical equipment that was never delivered to the patients.

United States District Judge Taylor B. McNeel sentenced Harden on April 15, 2022, to serve a term of 57 months in federal prison, followed by a term of 3 years of supervised release. Harden was also ordered to pay full restitution to all of the health care insurers she defrauded.

The announcement was made by United States Attorney Darren J. LaMarca, Special Agent in Charge Jermicha Fomby of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Mississippi, Special Agent in Charge Tamala Miles of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Inspector General (HHS OIG) Atlanta Regional Office, Special Agent in Charge Cynthia A. Bruce of the DoD OIG, Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS) Southeast Field Office, and Inspector General Martin J. Dickman of the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board, Office of Inspector General (RRB OIG).

"Submitting claims for unsubstantiated services threaten the integrity of the Medicare program and increases the financial burden on taxpayers," stated Tamala Miles, Special Agent in Charge with the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG). "Working closely with our partners, HHS-OIG will continue to safeguard the integrity of federal health care programs by investigating individuals who seek to exploit them."

"Health care fraud threatens the most vulnerable of our citizens by endangering the programs which provide care for them," stated Jermicha Fomby, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI in Mississippi. "It is imperative we proactively root out such acts as this fraud which erode the fabric of our healthcare system upon which our citizens depend. I want to commend the investigators and prosecutors who worked together on this

case. We look forward to continued partnerships such as this among the law enforcement community in Mississippi.”

“There are no victimless crimes. Stealing money from the Defense Health Agency (DHA) and Medicare is stealing money from all taxpayers,” stated Special Agent in Charge Cyndy Bruce, Office of the Inspector General (DoD-OIG), Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS), Southeast Field Office. “DCIS and our investigative partners will continue to come after those who seek to illegally enrich themselves and hold them accountable for their actions.”

“The U.S. Railroad Retirement Board, Office of Inspector General (RRB-OIG) is committed to fighting Medicare fraud, waste, and abuse and is proud to be part of this collaborative effort with the FBI, HHS-OIG, and DoD-OIG,” said Inspector General Martin J. Dickman. “The sentencing of Joy Beth Harden sends a loud and clear message that combating Medicare fraud is a top federal law enforcement priority and unscrupulous Medicare providers will not be tolerated.”

This case was investigated by the HHS-OIG, FBI, DCIS, and RRB-OIG. The case was prosecuted by Deputy Criminal Chief Dave Fulcher.

Topic(s):

Health Care Fraud

Component(s):

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

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