

PRESS RELEASE

Former Medical Practice Administrator Sentenced for Stealing Nearly \$600,000 From Her Employer, TDI Benefits Program

Monday, September 23, 2024

For Immediate Release

District of Rhode Island

PROVIDENCE, RI – A former office manager and bookkeeper for a Pawtucket medical practice has been sentenced to more than two years in federal prison for misappropriating nearly \$570,000 in medical practice funds and more than \$11,000 in TDI benefits she fraudulently applied for and received, announced United States Attorney Zachary A. Cunha.

Tianna Keller, 59, previously pleaded guilty to two charges of wire fraud and one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud. The defendant was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge William E. Smith to 27 months of incarceration to be followed by three years of federal supervised release. Additionally, at the request of the government, Keller was ordered to pay restitution totaling \$579,857 to the medical practice, an insurance company that covered some of the loss to the medical practice, and the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training Temporary Disability (TDI) Benefits program.

As reflected in court documents and information presented to the court, Ms. Keller, who managed all aspects of the medical practice's finances, developed and executed schemes to add family members and friends as unauthorized paid employees; collected and converted patient co-payments and other business funds to pay her own personal expenses; pay tens of thousands of dollars in personal credit card debt; pay wireless phone bills; and pay college tuition payments for a family member.

According to information presented to the court, once her fraud was discovered, Keller left the practice on medical leave. Upon expiration of her medical leave, she was terminated from the practice and applied for and was granted TDI benefits. Shortly thereafter, Keller gained new employment but continued to report to the Department of

Labor and Training that she was unable to work, and she continued to collect TDI benefit payments she was not entitled to receive.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Ronald R. Gendron.

The matter was investigated by the U.S. Department of Labor – Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Labor – Employee Benefits Security Administration, and Rhode Island State Police. United States Attorney Cunha thanks the Rhode Island Department of labor and Training for their assistance in the investigation of this matter.

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