

DETROIT NATIVE SUN

EMS providers owned millions, urge immediate reimbursement before emergency care is compromised

Lansing, Michigan - EMS providers are pleading with Michigan legislators to compensate them for unpaid emergency services provided to state prisons, before it impacts emergency operations around the state.

EMS agencies remain on the hook for nearly \$6 million in emergency services provided at Michigan Department of Corrections' prisons through its former healthcare provider Wellpath. This lack of payment has caused at least 15 providers across the state to deal with serious financial woes. Most dire is the situation in the Eastern Upper Peninsula, where delinquent payments of nearly \$500,000 owed to Kinross EMS put the agency less than a month from closing its doors.

"The Legislature must prioritize the health and safety of our communities by compensating EMS agencies for the \$6 million in emergency care provided on behalf of the State of Michigan," said Angela Madden, Michigan Association of Ambulance Services Executive Director. "This is a health and safety issue, not a partisan issue and we need urgent action before EMS providers are forced to close their doors and

leave communities without emergency care."

The lack of compensation continues to strain emergency response agencies, putting emergency care in jeopardy while leaving Michiganders vulnerable when they need help most. As EMS agencies are required under Michigan law to respond to all 9-1-1 requests, the State of Michigan must compensate EMS agencies for the outstanding MDOC bills. To date, action has not been taken to rectify this crisis and the nearly \$6 million deficit is taking its toll on EMS agencies, impacting lifesaving operations without reimbursement.

EMS providers are pleading with state officials to include direct reimbursement for affected agencies at the first available opportunity in a state budget supplemental "Compensating EMS for keeping our communities safe and healthy 24/7/365 must be a priority and we urge the lawmakers to step up and do the right thing," said Jeff White, chief of Richmond Lenox EMS, serving portions of Macomb and St. Clair Counties. "EMS providers are always there when people need them most and now it's time for the State of Michigan to step up before life-saving services are impacted."

Michigan businessman found guilty of employment tax crimes



A federal jury recently convicted a Michigan businessman for not paying employment taxes and not filing his own individual income tax returns.

According to court documents and evidence presented at trial, Dale Thrush, of Farwell, owned and operated several automotive repair service locations and a gas station. Thrush was responsible for withholding Social Security, Medicare and income taxes from his employees' wages and paying those funds over to the IRS on behalf of his employees. From October 2014 through December 2016, Thrush withheld those funds from his employees' wages but did not pay over the full amount of the withheld taxes to the IRS. Instead, Thrush used some of those funds to pay personal expenses, including the remodeling and construction costs for his wife's business.

In addition, Thrush did not file his own individual income tax returns for 2013 through 2016 despite being legally obligated to do so.

Thrush was convicted of three counts of willful failure to pay payroll taxes and four counts of willful failure to file individual income tax returns. He was acquitted of seven counts of willful failure to pay payroll taxes.

Thrush is scheduled to be sentenced on July 17. He faces a maximum penalty of five years in prison for each count of not paying employment taxes and a maximum penalty of one year in prison for each count of not filing his individual income tax returns. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Acting Deputy Assistant Attorney General Karen E. Kelly of the Justice Department's Tax Division made the announcement.

IRS Criminal Investigation is investigating the case.

Trial Attorneys Mark McDonald and Evan Mulbry of the Tax Division are prosecuting the case.

We're not running from our own House CBC declares war on Trump

By Stacy M. Brown
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In what might be an unprecedented show of force, a powerful contingent of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) met with African American journalists inside the Democratic Whip's Conference Room at the U.S. Capitol, laying out their battle plan against Donald Trump, Elon Musk and the far-right's dystopian blueprint known as Project 2025. CBC Chair Yvette Clarke, First Vice Chair Troy Carter, Whip Sydney Kamlager-Dove, former Chair Steven Horsford, Reps. Jahana Hayes, Summer Lee, and the ever-outspoken Jasmine Crockett made it clear—while they lack the votes to halt Trump's cruel and life-threatening policies, they are on the offensive with one goal in mind: retaking the House next year to neutralize his agenda.

As Trump prepared to address a joint session of Congress, most CBC members had vowed they would attend—not to validate him, but to "look him in the eye" as he and Musk continue to ravage the country. "Many of us are expecting lies to be told," Kamlager-Dove stated. "We'll be curious to see all of the gaslighting that has happened on the other side too. We want to facilitate ways in which we can work with [The Black Press]." Rep. Marilyn Strickland was blunt about why she won't be bullied out of attending. "I'm going to this address because this is the People's House, and people elected me to represent them. He's not running me out of my own House," she declared. Maryland Rep. Glen Ivey refused to sugarcoat Trump's economic disaster. "The things he's done are terrible. The tariffs he put in place are terrible. They're taking money out of people's pockets," Ivey stated, highlighting how federal employees in his district are being sacrificed for what he called a "big grift" benefiting the billionaire class, including Musk. "Trump is pulling money together for a multi-trillion-dollar tax cut for people like Musk," he said. Horsford didn't hold back, slam-

Four pharmacists sentenced for roles in \$13M Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurer fraud conspiracy

Four pharmacy owners have been sentenced for their roles in a conspiracy to commit health care fraud and wire fraud.

Pharmacist Raef Hamaed, of Maricopa County, Arizona, was sentenced on Jan. 8 to 10 years in prison; pharmacist Tarek Fakhuri, of Windsor, Ontario, Canada, was sentenced on Jan. 13 to seven years in prison; pharmacist Ali Abdelrazzaq, of Macomb County, Michigan, was sentenced on Jan. 15 to two years in prison; and pharmacist Kindy Ghussin, of Greene County, Ohio, was sentenced this month to five years and five months in prison.

According to court documents and evidence presented at trial, Hamaed, Fakhuri, Ghussin, and Abdelrazzaq billed Medicare, Medicaid, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan for prescription medications that they did not dispense at five pharmacies they owned and operated: Eastside Pharmacy, Harper Drugs, and Wayne Campus Pharmacy in Michigan, and Heartland Pharmacy and Heartland Pharmacy 2 in Ohio. The defendants collectively caused over \$13 million of loss to Medicare, Medicaid, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan.

On Sept. 5, 2024, a federal jury convicted Hamaed, Fakhuri, Ghussin, and Abdelrazzaq of conspiracy to commit health care fraud and wire fraud. The jury also convicted Fakhuri of one count of health care fraud. Hamaed was sentenced for his role in the conspiracy at all five pharmacies; Fakhuri was sen-

ting Trump's budget-slashing schemes. "That [stuff] is real. We understand. The tax cuts—his ultimate goal—so he can screw America, and Black America is at the top of his list," he warned.

Many members argued that their presence at Trump's address was itself an act of resistance.

"If we don't show up, they will have people filling those seats and a room full of sycophants cheering for his ass as he continues to gaslight us," Kamlager-Dove said. "So one oppositional thing to do is to show up and make him look us in the face and lie to our constituents. He's done nothing about the \$15 eggs or a damn thing to keep the planes in the air. An act of resistance is showing up and telling him to his face that he is lying—just like an act of resistance is not showing up and telling him F— you."

Then came Rep. Jasmine Crockett, the CBC's fiercest fighter, ready to take the war to Trump and the far-right machine. She zeroed in on the Black Press and digital media as crucial allies in breaking through the noise. "The [Black Press] is part of that strategy. To make sure you have a message from us to get out," Crockett said. "Everyone wants to pretend things are normal, but they're not. For everyone trying to be prim and proper, God bless them. Some of us, such as I, are a little rough around the edges, but people respond. Trump is idiot talk, but it resonated.

"But Black America has always been the trendsetters, and we have that in the Black Caucus," she continued. "We have to make sure we are hitting all parts of our Black demographics. We will talk to them differently. We will engage in the podcast, we will do the platforms. I'm on every single thing."

The CBC told Black journalists they're also launching a bus tour—not just in their districts, but deep into Republican strongholds, bringing the Black Press along to document their fight. They insisted that this is no ordinary resistance. It's a declaration of war.

tenced for his role in the conspiracy at Harper Drugs, Wayne Campus Pharmacy, and Heartland Pharmacy; Ghussin was sentenced for his role in the conspiracy at Wayne Campus Pharmacy and both Heartland pharmacies; and Abdelrazzaq was sentenced for his role in the conspiracy at Wayne Campus Pharmacy.

Supervisory Official Antoinette T. Bacon of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, Special Agent in Charge Cheyoryea Gibson of the FBI Detroit Field Office, and Special Agent in Charge Mario Pinto of the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG) made the announcement.

The FBI Detroit Field Office and HHS-OIG investigated the case.

Trial Attorneys Claire Sobczak Pacelli, Kelly M. Warner, and S. Babu Kaza of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section prosecuted the case.

The Fraud Section leads the Criminal Division's efforts to combat health care fraud through the Health Care Fraud Strike Force Program. Since March 2007, this program, currently comprised of nine strike forces operating in 27 federal districts, has charged more than 5,800 defendants who collectively have billed federal health care programs and private insurers more than \$30 billion. In addition, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, working in conjunction with HHS-OIG, are taking steps to hold providers accountable for their involvement in health care fraud schemes.

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