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Charges filed against former state employee in kickback scheme involving nearly \$200,000

LANSING - Attorney General Dana Nessel and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Director Robert Gordon recently announced that Detroit resident and former MDHHS employee Eliza Yulonda Ijames, 56, has been charged with three felonies: one count of Medicaid Fraud-Conspiracy and two counts of Medicaid Fraud-Kickbacks. The penalty for Medicaid Fraud-Conspiracy is up to 10 years in prison and/or \$50,000. The penalty for Medicaid Fraud-Kickbacks is up to four years in prison and/or \$50,000.

Ijames was an MDHHS employee working as an Independent Living Services Specialist within the Wayne County Adult Services office. Ijames was responsible for approving Medicaid beneficiaries for home help services - non-skilled services intended to assist people with activities of daily living.

Ijames is alleged to have referred clients to agencies with which she had a personal and financial relationship and approved payments to those same agencies. Representatives from these agencies then deposited funds into bank accounts owned in part by Ijames. Ijames withdrew nearly \$200,000 from these accounts for

her own personal use between about January 2015 through December 2017.

The matter was referred to the Attorney General's Office by the MDHHS Office of Inspector General after an extensive and thorough investigation.

"Public employees who betray the trust placed in them are particularly disappointing and do not represent the tens of thousands of dedicated people who work to make Michigan better every day," Nessel said. "I would like to thank the team with the MDHHS Office of Inspector General for identifying and referring this case to my office."

"We have a duty to put the public interest first, and it's hard to think of a greater violation of that duty than taking kickbacks," MDHHS Director Robert Gordon said. "I commend the hard work of the OIG and the AG's offices to uphold the values of public service."

Ijames was arraigned on Feb. 28, before Judge Richard Ball of the 54B District Court in East Lansing and given a \$10,000 personal recognizance bond. She is next due in court for a preliminary exam on March 8, 2018.

Attorney General Nessel joins two federal immigration cases

LANSING - Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel has joined two federal amicus briefs supporting legal actions against the director of the US Department of Homeland Security to protect immigrants who are already in this country and to protect those attempting to enter this country.

The cases are: Ramos v Nielsen, US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

AG Nessel joined a coalition of 21 other Attorneys General to support the plaintiffs' efforts to prevent the potential deportation of hundreds of thousands of people who hold Temporary Protected Status (TPS). The brief specifically asks the Ninth Circuit to uphold the preliminary nationwide injunction that blocks the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) from terminating the TPS designations for people from Haiti, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Sudan.

"Many of these people are in the United States and specifically in Michigan, because their home countries face armed conflict, natural disasters or other crisis that make their return home unsafe," Nessel said. "Many TPS holders have lived here for a decade or more and have started families and businesses, bought homes, and significantly contributed to their communities."



Al Otro Lado v Nielsen, US District Court for the Southern District of California.

AG Nessel joined this challenge to the US Department of Homeland Security's "Turnback Policy," which mandates lower-level officials turn back asylum seekers at the border. The lawsuit brought on by nonprofit legal services provider Al Otro Lado challenges the US Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) unlawful practice of denying individuals access to the asylum process at ports of entry on the southern border of the US. The CBP methods include misrepresentations, threats and intimidation, coercion, verbal and physical abuse, and a practice known as "metering," which puts artificial daily limits on the number of asylum-seekers allowed to cross the border. Michigan joined 19 states in the multistate amicus brief.

"Michigan is the fifth largest refugee settlement state in the country," Nessel said. "We also have the nation's largest state program for Unaccompanied Refugee Minors to help those children who were separated from their parents at the border. These children and their families have experienced terrible treatment from our own officials and that must be stopped."

Telford Telescope: Detroit reflections old and new



Left to right: Cliff Hatcher, John Telford, Ralph Williams, Billy Smith and Coach David L. Holmes.

By Dr. John Telford
SUN COLUMNIST



Now in the third month of 2019 and of my 84th year, I find myself reminiscing yet again on our Detroit track & field-related events of six decades ago, as well as on some suspiciously curious Detroit-public-schools-and-Detroit-public-library-related occurrences of a more recent vintage. The late "Bullet Billy" Smith, my teammate on swift WSU teams that won 880-yard relay races at the Ohio and Penn Relays and elsewhere in that halcyon Motown era of the 1950s, was a DPS hurdles champion at Northwestern High School in 1950 and broke the world record in the 65-yard low hurdles in 1956. (Pictured from left are champion 880-yard relayists Cliff Hatcher, me, Ralph Williams, Billy, and Coach David L. Holmes. Hatcher and Williams also teamed with me and Ralph Carter to win the mile relay at the Ohio and Penn Relays that same year.) Another great relay team whereupon I teamed with Billy, Jim Bibbs, and the late Irving "Pete" Petross was the 1958 Detroit Track Club sprint team that won silver medals in the National AAU sprint-relay final in New York's old Madison Square Garden. We dropped the baton while in the lead, went from first place to sixth in two seconds, and then snatched the stick back up and zoomed miraculously past four other teams to miss winning the gold by incredible inches. The previous week, members of that same DTC team had shattered the world 880-yard relay record at the old Yost Fieldhouse in Ann Arbor. Bibbs, who turns 90 this month, was the first to tie Jesse Owens' world 60-yard mark. He later became the head track coach at MSU.

In addition to reflecting on my having run on those record-breaking relay teams and having set several individual sprint records while outrunning Olympians on the U.S. team in Europe, I also find myself reflecting on the sad state of Detroit's public schools, within which I set a record of quite another sort: the number of times a DPS employee has been FIRED. I was fired from the Detroit Public School Dis-

trict FOUR times, including from two executive directorships and in 2013 from the SUPERINTENDENCY ITSELF by the newly-empowered DPS Emergency Manager when Lansing Republicans undemocratically reinstated the emergency manager law that we Michiganders had voted in 2012 to rescind, and which I had fought against in print and over the airwaves multiple times. In 2017, I signed a part-time contract as the newly-formed Detroit Public Schools Community District's Poet-in-Residence, a position I still hold. In 2018, I applied (unsuccessfully) to the DPSCD Board for an appointment to the Detroit Public Library Commission. (The Detroit school board makes those appointments.) This winter, I applied for a second time (again unsuccessfully), along with the great social activist and former DPS board member Elena Herrada. I'm as yet unaware who did get selected--someone named Edith, I'm told, who hopefully thus must be some rare kind of dynamo, to have been so curiously chosen over the brilliant Elena and over a Detroit octogenarian educator who has authored six published books and more than a thousand newspaper columns. (Perhaps newly-anointed Commissioner Edith has written SEVEN books and MORE THAN two thousand columns??) We perennially inquisitive Detroiters would all greatly appreciate being enlightened by the DPSCD Board regarding Edith's awards, credentials, authorships, and other apparently vastly superior qualifications for the leadership position which the DPSCD Board has curiously chosen to give her over Elena and me.

In the meantime, God and the Fates willing, I'll continue to write my columns, host my Detroit shows on WCHB, galvanize my activist affiliations, write yet another book, and do as much else as I can to foster a better education for all of Detroit's public schoolchildren, whose test scores during the two decades of the state's plundering takeover of our schools have sunk to become America's worst by far.

Hear activist Detroit educator and former NCAA All-American sprinter John Telford Saturdays at 9:30 a.m. and Mondays at 6:30 p.m. on WCHB AM1340. The call-in number is (313) 837-1340. Get his books at The Source Booksellers on Cass Avenue, at Barnes & Noble stores, and on amazon.com (type in Dr. John Telford). His website is www.AlifeontheRUN.com. Email him at DrJohnTelfordEdD@aol.com or call (313) 460-82872 to advertise in his show or appear on it. His programs are often videotaped for streaming on DetroitipTelevision (DETipTV.com) and on his Facebook page.

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