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## **AG ANNOUNCES CONVICTION OF BESSEMER WOMAN FOR THEFT FROM ALABAMA MEDICAID AGENCY**

(MONTGOMERY)— Attorney General Luther Strange announced the conviction of Sonia Judd Coleman, 34, of Bessemer, for second-degree theft from the Alabama Medicaid Agency. Coleman, who has been held at the Montgomery County Detention Facility, pleaded guilty today in Montgomery County Circuit Court.

The Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit presented evidence to a Montgomery County grand jury, resulting in her indictment in January. Coleman was charged for her role in conspiring with a Bessemer Pharmacist, Alan Bruce Connell, to file numerous false claims for payment to the Alabama Medicaid Agency. The total loss to the Alabama Medicaid Agency was over \$50,000.00.

Connell, who pleaded guilty in April, conspired with Coleman to bill the Alabama Medicaid Agency for expensive medications her child required but were not dispensed by Connell. As part of the scheme, Coleman would take her child's prescriptions to Connell, who would submit a claim with the Alabama Medicaid Agency for reimbursement.

On several occasions the medications were not provided. Instead Coleman would receive cash payment, ranging from \$40-\$50 to a few hundred dollars, for the prescription. In total, it is believed Coleman received approximately \$1,000 for her role in the scheme. A review of Connell's records revealed that, during the time period in question, he did not have enough of the medication in stock to be able to dispense the amount for which he billed the Alabama Medicaid Agency.

"It is reprehensible for a parent to steal by denying her child access to needed medicines," said Attorney General Strange. "These defendants entered into an appalling conspiracy of greed to profit by not treating a child's illness. I am pleased that they have been called to account and will be punished for their crimes."

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Coleman pleaded guilty to second-degree theft of property, a Class C felony. She is scheduled to be sentenced by Montgomery County Circuit Judge Johnny Hardwick on July 9. Connell has not yet been sentenced.

Following Coleman's indictment, the child was removed from her custody by the Department of Human Resources.

The case was investigated by the Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit after being referred for investigation by the Program Integrity Division of the Alabama Medicaid Agency.

Attorney General Strange commended his Medicaid Fraud Control Unit for their steadfast investigation of this case. He also thanked the Alabama Board of Pharmacy and the Alabama Medicaid Agency's Program Integrity Unit for assistance.