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Olens: Health care groups agree to \$25M settlement

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Attorney General Sam Olens on Friday announced a \$25 million civil settlement with Columbus medical providers over allegations of over-billing and kickbacks.

Columbus Regional Hospital System and other health care groups have agreed to pay Georgia and the federal government \$25 million, plus an additional \$10 million if certain financial conditions are met, Olens' office said. Georgia's share of the \$25 million is about \$750,000.

The state alleges that the groups submitted claims for services billed at higher levels than allowed, for radiation therapy that did not qualify and for claims that violated Medicaid rules that prohibit payments in return for Medicaid referrals.

In addition, Dr. Andrew

Pippas, a medical oncologist at the hospital and medical director at another defendant, John B. Amos Cancer Center, will pay \$425,000 to settle claims he received salary and payments that resulted in the submission of illegal Medicaid and Medicare claims.

"Medical providers must ensure that they do not solicit, offer, or accept payments based on their referral of patients," Olens said in a statement. "It should go without saying that when treating any patient, providers may only bill for services actually performed."

The other defendants in the case were The Medical Center, Columbus Regional Oncology Treatment Center and Regional Oncology.

The medical providers claim no liability, according to the agreement. Instead, all parties agreed to settle to avoid trial.

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