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## Nursing Home Owner Found Guilty in Kickbacks, Bribery Scheme

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A federal jury in Miami found nursing home owner Philip Esformes guilty on 20 counts related to bribery, money laundering, kickbacks, and obstruction of justice.

The jurors found Esformes guilty on 20 counts related to bribes he paid to a variety of individuals in order to carry out his scheme, including doctors, state health agency officials, and even a former University of Pennsylvania men's basketball coach.

Prosecutors accused Esformes of fraudulently receiving \$450 million from Medicare and Medicaid through his South Florida network of facilities for services that were either provided because of bribes, that were not needed in the first place, or were not provided at all. Through this process, prosecutors say that he pocketed \$38 million for himself through a network of 256 bank accounts.

Prosecutors claimed that Esformes would bribe doctors to refer patients to his nursing homes, and then move them to his assisted living facilities once he had charged Medicare for the maximum 100 days the government would pay out for skilled nursing services. Esformes owns seven nursing homes and nine assisted living facilities in the South Florida area.

Once at the assisted living facilities, Esformes would then move the patients back to the hospital and get the bribed doctors to sign off on more skilled nursing care, resetting the clock for more nursing home care.

The trial included testimony from a former Florida Agency for Health Care Admission worker, who testified about how she had received bribes from Esformes to supply inspection schedules and patient complaints. Other witnesses testified that they had worked with Esformes to set up kickback arrangements with health care providers who were seeking access to Esformes' thousands of patients and doctors who provided patient referrals.

In addition to all of these charges, Esformes was also charged for bribing a former University of Pennsylvania head men's basketball coach with \$300,000 to add his son on a list of priority basketball recruits and admitted to the Wharton School of Business.

Esformes was also found guilty of one count of obstruction of justice for allegedly suggesting that an associate leave the country to escape federal health care fraud charges.

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