



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers, Speech-Language Pathologists & Music Therapists

**IN THE MATTER OF
ELIA TORRES**

License Number: 05094

Case: AHSM-10-2024

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**BEFORE THE MARYLAND
BOARD OF EXAMINERS FOR
AUDIOLOGISTS, HEARING
AID DISPENSERS,
SPEECH-LANGUAGE
PATHOLOGISTS AND MUSIC
THERAPISTS**

PRE-CHARGE CONSENT ORDER OF SUSPENSION

BACKGROUND

On September 30, 2024, Elia Torres (the "Respondent") entered a guilty plea in Montgomery County Circuit Court criminal case C-15-CR-001089. The Respondent contacted the Board on October 9, 2024, to self-report her guilty plea. On October 17, 2024, the Respondent provided a letter providing additional information and context to her guilty plea.

The Board referred the matter to its Disciplinary Committee for investigation and a possible resolution.

The Respondent and the Board subsequently agreed to the following Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Order.

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Board finds that:

1. The Board issued the Respondent License No.: 05094 to practice Speech-Language Pathology in the State of Maryland on July 5, 2005,
2. The Respondent had a valid license to practice at all times relevant to the complaint,
3. The Respondent operated Diversity Talks, LLC ("Diversity Talks"),
4. Between January 1, 2019 and January 31, 2024 the Respondent engaged in a large scale fraud against Medicaid,
5. The Respondent fraudulently billed approximately 40 Medicaid recipients receiving services from Diversity Talks at a rate of seven (7) days per week for two (2) to five (5) years continuously,
6. The fraudulent billing included services to minor Medicaid recipients under the age of two years old,
7. A Medicaid audit revealed the Respondent fraudulently obtained approximately \$517,033.13 for services purportedly provided to infants,

8. The Office of the Attorney General conducted an investigation into the fraudulent billing,
9. At least two families interviewed confirmed they moved out of state but continued to be billed for services purportedly provided to the minor Medicaid recipients at a rate of seven (7) days a week for more than a year after the families moved from Maryland,
10. On September 30, 2024 the Respondent entered a guilty plea to defrauding Maryland Medicaid of more than \$1,000,000.00 in the Montgomery County Circuit Court in criminal case C-15-CR-001089,
11. The Respondent received a sentence of 5 years with all but 18 months suspended to be served on a home detention, followed by a three-year term of probation and a \$10,000 fine which was suspended
12. The Respondent was found liable for restitution in the amount of \$1,019,719.71 with \$225,000 paid at the time of sentencing.
13. Additional investigation revealed that many of the minor Medicaid recipients involved had parents who did not speak English as a primary language.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Maryland Annotated Code Health Occupations ("Md. Code Ann. H.O.") §2-314 provides that the Board may suspend or revoke a license if the licensee commits any of the following actions:

(3) Commits fraud or deceit in the practice of audiology, hearing aid dispensing, or speech-language pathology, or assistance of the practice of speech-language pathology or audiology;

(4) Is convicted of or pleads guilty or nolo contendere to a felony or to a crime involving moral turpitude, whether or not any appeal or other proceeding is pending to have the conviction or plea set aside;

(5) Obtains a fee through fraud or misrepresentation;

(16) Knowingly makes or files a false report or record in the practice of audiology, hearing aid dispensing, or speech-language pathology, or assistance in the practice of speech-language pathology or audiology;

(18) Submits a false statement to collect a fee;

By engaging in a pattern of fraudulent billing the Respondent failed to comply with subsections (3), (5), (16) and (18) of H.O. §2-314. By entering a guilty plea in criminal case C-15-CR-001089 the Respondent violated H.O. §2-314(4).

ORDER

Based upon the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, it is hereby:

ORDERED that the Respondent's license to practice speech-language pathology, Lic. No.: 05094, is **SUSPENDED FOR A MINIMUM OF THREE (3) YEARS**; and it is further

ORDERED that the Respondent's license to practice speech-language pathology will be marked at **SUSPENDED** on the Board's website while the suspension is active; and it is further

ORDERED that Respondent's license, Lic. No.: 05094, will be placed on Probation for a **minimum period of THREE (3) years** when the Suspension is lifted; and it is further

ORDERED that while the Respondent is on Probation, the Respondent's license to practice speech-language pathology will be marked as on **PROBATION** on the Board's website during the probationary period; and it is further

ORDERED that as a condition of Probation the Respondent is required to disclose the existence of this Order to any employer and provide proof of disclosure to the Board, and it is further

ORDERED that as a condition of Probation the Respondent is required to submit periodic audits of her billing practices to the Board every **NINETY (90) DAYS**; and it is further

ORDERED that as a condition of Probation Respondent shall comply with all laws and regulations governing the practice of hearing aid dispensing in Maryland; and it is further

ORDERED that the Respondent is responsible for the cost of compliance with this Order; and it is further

ORDERED that if the Respondent violates any terms of the Order, the Board, in its discretion, after notice and an opportunity to for an evidentiary hearing before the Board, if there is a genuine dispute as to a material fact, or an opportunity for a show cause hearing before the Board, may impose **any other disciplinary sanction which the Board is statutorily authorized to impose in this case under H.O. §2-314**, including a reprimand, probation, suspension or revocation, and/or additional monetary fine, said violation being proven by a preponderance of the evidence; and it is further

ORDERED that the Respondent may petition to lift the Suspension in this Order **no earlier than three (3) years and one day from the effective date of of this Order** and that the Board shall have sole discretion to lift the Suspension in this Order; and it is further

ORDERED that the Respondent may petition to lift the Probation in this Order **no earlier than three years (3) and one (1) day from the day the Board agrees to lift the suspension in this Order**; and it is further

ORDERED that this is a Final Decision and Order of the Board and, as such, is a **PUBLIC DOCUMENT** pursuant to Maryland Code Annotated, General Provisions Article 4-101 *et. seq.*

11/23/24

Date



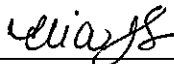
Dr. Arifa Qureshi, Au.D., CCC-A Board Chair

CONSENT

By this Consent, I acknowledge that I have read this Consent Order in its entirety, and I hereby admit the truth of the Findings of Fact, and accept and submit to the foregoing Consent Order and its conditions. I acknowledge the validity of this Consent Order as if entered into after the conclusion of a formal evidentiary hearing in which I would have had the right to legal counsel authorized to practice law in Maryland, to confront witnesses, to give testimony, to request subpoenas for witnesses, to call witnesses on my own behalf, to introduce testimony and evidence on my own behalf, and to all other substantive and procedural protections provided by law. I waive these rights, as well as any appeal rights under Maryland Code Annotated, State Government Article § 10-222.

I sign this Consent Order after having an opportunity to consult with an attorney, voluntarily and without reservation, and I fully understand and comprehend the language, meaning, terms, and effect of this Consent Order.

11/30/2024
Date


Elia Torres, License No: 05904

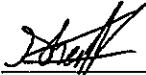
NOTARIZATION

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STATE OF ~~MARYLAND~~
CITY/COUNTY of Washington DC

I HEREBY CERTIFY that on this 30th day of November, 2024, before me, a Notary Public of the State and City/County aforesaid, ELIA TORRES personally appeared, and declared and affirmed under penalties of perjury that signing the foregoing Consent Order was her voluntary act and deed.

AS WITNESS my hand and Notarial Seal.



Notary Public
My Commission Expires: 06/14/2028

