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DISBARRED ATTORNEY CHARGED WITH FELONY THEFT OF MORE THAN \$563,000 FROM A CLIENT'S INSURANCE SETTLEMENT



Michael F. Bradley

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (Aug. 20, 2020) — Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele announced the arrest of disbarred attorney Michael F. Bradley, 50, of Warrington, Pa., on multiple felonies for the theft and misappropriation of more than \$563,000 of insurance settlement funds intended to be used for the care of one of his clients who was seriously injured in a car accident. Bradley is charged with multiple first-degree felony counts of Dealing in Proceeds of Unlawful Activities, Theft by Unlawful Taking or Disposition, Theft by Deception, Receiving Stolen Property and Theft by Failure to Make Required Disposition of Funds Received, as well as related charges.

Bradley was the legal representative for Branden Thornton, who received \$1,105,000 for his lifelong care after he was seriously injured in a Sept. 9, 2012

vehicle crash while walking along a roadway in Upper Merion Township. By virtue of the representation agreement, Bradley received 25% of the gross award—which amounted to \$276,250—and he was responsible for communicating with the insurance companies and paying Branden’s medical bills with the funds, which he did during the ensuing three years.

However, Thornton’s mother was told by Bradley that the funds for her son’s care were depleted, and she demanded an accounting. She then filed a complaint in March 2018 with The Office of Disciplinary Counsel (ODC) of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, which investigates alleged misconduct by attorneys. The ODC’s subsequent investigation found that the funds collected for Thornton had been mishandled by Bradley, also finding evidence of possible theft. Based on the ODC investigation, Bradley was disbarred on Feb. 8, 2019, and the ODC referred the matter to the District Attorney’s Office for possible criminal investigation on March 21, 2019.

The ensuing criminal investigation by the Montgomery County Detective Bureau determined that between December 2014 and May 2017, Bradley misappropriated \$563,840.75 of the \$1,105,000 settlement funds that came from insurance companies and the responsible driver. The investigation also found that Bradley had co-mingled Thornton’s funds with his business account and had used those funds to pay for his personal expenses—such as \$220,000 to his mortgage company to avoid foreclosure, renovations to his home, new furniture, vacations, plastic surgery, jewelry, college tuition, student loan payments, vehicle payments, nearly 1,000 purchases from Amazon and other unauthorized expenses not for Thornton’s care.

“The defendant’s theft of more than half a million dollars—funds that were dedicated to helping his client receive the care he needed to live—which he used to pay for extravagant goods and vacations, is not only illegal but disturbing on a basic human level,” said DA Steele. “The defendant was entrusted to help Thornton.”

Bradley was arraigned before Magisterial District Judge Cathleen Rebar, who set bail at \$250,000 unsecured, and Bradley was released. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for 1 p.m., Sept. 1, 2020, in front of Judge Rebar.

The case will be prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Kelli McGinnis.

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele

CRIMINAL CHARGES, AND ANY DISCUSSION THEREOF, ARE MERELY ALLEGATIONS AND ALL DEFENDANTS ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL AND UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY.