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AeroMD
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Headline

Lawsuit Filed Against Cigna Alleging Denial of Patient Access to Air Ambulance Transport and Failure to Meet Payment Obligations for Past Missions over Many Years.

St Thomas, USVI - AeroMD, the only on island air ambulance company, with ICU-equipped planes and medical crews based in the Territory, announced today that it has filed a lawsuit against Cigna in response to Cigna's repeated denials of patient access to essential rapid medical transport, and Cigna's failure to meet their payment obligations for past missions flown for Cigna beneficiaries. Cigna's delinquent payment obligations to AeroMD now amount to over \$9 Million, with an average overdue of more than three years.

The lawsuit aims to hold Cigna accountable for their improper actions against AeroMD, designed to undermine AeroMD's business viability at the expense of their own beneficiaries' wellbeing.

The lawsuit addresses the following key issues:

- 1. Denial of Access to Care:** Cigna has systematically denied patients access to AeroMD's USVI-based medevac planes and specialized emergency care capabilities for rapid medical transport, causing undue harm to patients and impeding their ability to receive timely emergency care. By seeking justice in this matter, AeroMD aims to ensure that all individuals have immediate access to emergency air ambulance services when their health or lives depend on it.
- 2. Healthcare Inequity:** Cigna is creating an inequitable healthcare environment in our remote and isolated Territory through its denial of access to rapid medical air transportation for Cigna beneficiaries, including VI Government employees. The USVI is more than one thousand miles from the nearest medical center capable of emergency surgical interventions for severe traumatic injury or with the ability to handle complex cardiac, stroke and other life-threatening emergencies. Denying such patients access to AeroMD's ICU-equipped medevac jets and specialized medical teams based here in the Territory, means many critical patients are left waiting for Cigna's "cheaper" planes. These discount aviation transports usually come from the U.S. mainland, and sometimes take several days to arrive all while an AeroMD aircraft sits at a USVI airport ready to take off and patients are in need of emergency medical care. Such delays can have serious and even fatal consequences. This lawsuit seeks to shed light on this issue and to insist upon equitable access to care, regardless of insurance coverage, ensuring that all individuals have the same opportunity to receive emergency healthcare services without delay when needed.

3. Failure to Make Appropriate Payments for Past Missions: For many years, AeroMD has attempted to negotiate reasonable “in-network” contract rates for evacuating Cigna-covered patients with medical emergencies, but Cigna has repeatedly rebuffed those efforts. AeroMD has consistently received arbitrary and grossly inadequate payments from Cigna for “Out-of-Network” flights. These payments do not represent fair reimbursement or even cover the basic costs of such missions, forcing the company to absorb substantial financial losses.

4. Threat to Sustainable Healthcare: Cigna’s actions constitute a clear-cut threat to the sustainability of AeroMD’s ability to provide lifesaving services to all USVI residents, including the many Medicare and Medicaid patients whom AeroMD already serves at a financial loss. This lawsuit addresses these systemic issues and demands fair and medically necessary access to emergency missions and appropriate payment to safeguard the overall well-being of patients and the USVI healthcare system. This ensures the sustainability of AeroMD flights into the future.

Insufficient reimbursement not only undermines the viability of healthcare organizations, but also impedes their ability to invest in future resources, recruit skilled healthcare professionals, and upgrade medical infrastructure. That is particularly true for AeroMD, the only USVI-based air ambulance provider, who has invested substantial assets (personnel, aircraft, and equipment) in the USVI to ensure that access to medevac flights are available as emergencies arise. Because no other air ambulance providers are stationed in the USVI, no other air ambulance providers can come close to approaching AeroMD’s patient response times and capabilities.

5. Cigna is an Aberration Among Insurance Carriers: For many years, AeroMD has flown USVI patients covered by other insurers. Those other insurers have reimbursed AeroMD at reasonable rates, without the problems AeroMD has experienced with Cigna. Cigna’s actions constitute unfair practices by a huge insurance company that treats our small air ambulance company based in the Territory as an inconvenience.

Dr. Brendan Anzalone, President and Chief Medical Officer of AeroMD notes “the well-being of our Territory hinges on equitable access to medical care, and it is our collective responsibility to ensure that no family faces the heart-wrenching burden of delayed medevac assistance when a local medevac asset is available. Let us work together as a community to dismantle medical barriers, protect our collective safety and forge a path toward a healthcare system that truly reflects our communities shared values of compassion and empathy.”

Summary

AeroMD is committed to fighting for the rights of patients in need of timely medical transportation across the region. The lawsuit seeks to stop Cigna's harmful practices and prompt a change in their policies, ensuring that patients receive the emergent care when they need it, and medical transportation services are fairly compensated.

For more information or to speak with a representative from AeroMD, please contact:

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About AeroMD

AeroMD is the only air ambulance company with planes based on the ground in the USVI and is dedicated to ensuring access to care and fair reimbursement for healthcare providers. AeroMD has completed over 2000 air ambulance missions in support of USVI hospitals, residents and tourists. Through advocacy, legal action, and public awareness campaigns, AeroMD strives to create a healthcare system that prioritizes the needs of patients and healthcare professionals alike.