

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Missouri

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Charity Executives, Arkansas State Senator Indicted for Embezzlement and Public Corruption Scheme

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Two former executives of a Springfield, Mo.-based charity and an Arkansas state senator have been indicted by a federal grand jury for their roles in a multi-million-dollar public corruption scheme that involved embezzlement, bribes and illegal campaign contributions for elected public officials in Missouri and Arkansas, announced U.S. Attorney Tim Garrison of the Western District of Missouri and Assistant Attorney General Brian A. Benczkowski of the Justice Department's Criminal Division.

Bontiea Bernedette Goss, 63, her husband, Tommy Ray Goss, also known as "Tom," 63, residents of Springfield, Mo., and Boulder, Colo., and Jeremy Young Hutchinson, 45, of Little Rock, Ark., were charged on March 29, 2019, in a 32-count indictment by a federal grand jury in Springfield, Mo., which was unsealed today.

The indictment alleges that the Gosses, who were high-level executives at Preferred Family Healthcare, Inc. (formerly known as Alternative Opportunities, Inc.), and Hutchinson, who is an attorney and served as a state senator in the Arkansas Senate from 2011 to 2018, along with others, participated in a conspiracy from 2005 to November 2017 to embezzle and misapply the funds of a charitable organization that received federal funds, to pay bribes and kickbacks to elected officials (including Hutchinson), and to deprive the citizens of Arkansas of their right to the honest services of those elected officials. According to the indictment, in exchange for the bribes and kickbacks offered by the Gosses and other co-conspirators, Hutchinson and other elected officials allegedly provided favorable legislative and official action for the charity, including directing funds from the state's General Improvement Fund (GIF).

The indictment also alleges that the Gosses and others defrauded the charity, and the governmental entities that funded the charity, by embezzling and misapplying charity funds for their personal benefit, including, but not limited to:

- causing the charity to pay for chartered air flights for the Gosses to commute between their home in Colorado and their work at the charity's office in Springfield;
- providing millions of dollars in interest-free loans to their for-profit companies;
- charging the charity inflated prices to lease vehicles from their for-profit companies;
- renting charity-owned commercial real estate to one of their for-profit companies at below-market rates or, in some instances, for free; and
- using charity funds to pay for personal services for themselves, including child and pet care, housekeeping and cleaning their personal residences, picking up and delivering groceries, and shoveling snow, among other personal services paid for by the charity.

The indictment also contains a forfeiture allegation, which would require the Gosses and Hutchinson to forfeit to the government any property obtained from the proceeds of the alleged offenses.

The charity was known as Alternative Opportunities, Inc. from its founding in 1991 until its 2015 merger with Preferred Family Healthcare. The charity, which is cooperating with federal

investigators, provided a variety of services to individuals in Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas, Oklahoma and Illinois, including mental and behavioral health treatment and counseling, substance abuse treatment and counseling, employment assistance, aid to individuals with developmental disabilities and medical services.

The charges contained in this indictment are simply accusations, and not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charges must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

This case is the culmination of a two-and-a-half-year investigation, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Steven M. Mohlhenrich of the Western District of Missouri; Trial Attorney Marco A. Palmieri with the Public Integrity Section of the Department of Justice's Criminal Division; Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Ben Wulff of the Western District of Arkansas; and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephanie Mazzanti of the Eastern District of Arkansas. It was investigated by IRS-Criminal Investigation, the FBI, and the Offices of the Inspectors General from the Departments of Justice, Labor, and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC). This is a combined investigation with the Western District of Arkansas, the Eastern District of Arkansas, and the Public Integrity Section of the Department of Justice.