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Dear Valued Consumers and Designated Representatives:

It's with great excitement that I can communicate to you for the first time as CEO of Consumer Directed Choices ("CDChoices"). While I have had the chance to get to know many of you over my 14+ years at CDChoices, my appointment to CEO provides me the opportunity to get to know more of you and to share my story with you. We have been busy over the last several months making decisions based on our mission, vision, and values, which I wanted to update you.

Important Update: New York State Announced Lead Fiscal Intermediary Awards

After almost a year, CDChoices received notice on February 11th from the Department of Health ("DOH") that we were selected as a Lead Fiscal Intermediary ("FI") under the long-pending Request for Offer ("RFO"). CDChoices was selected among approximately 390 Lead FI applicants to contract with DOH to perform FI services for Consumers enrolled in Consumer Directed Personal Assistance ("CDPA"). CDChoices was 1 of 68 Lead FIs selected in New York State.

What this means for you is that your CDPA program will continue without interruption. The staff you have come to know, trust, and rely on to perform your program and payroll administration will remain the same. Receiving this award is a significant achievement for all of us and further establishes CDChoices as the premier FI. We have, are, and will continue to perform CDPA for the right reasons ensuring you have a choice when receiving your care, and choosing who comes into your home, providing you greater flexibility and independence.

This achievement could not have been accomplished without the guidance from our Board of Directors, and the work performed by our administrative team, our loyal Consumers, Designated Representative, and their Personal Assistants, and all those who represented CDChoices in the years past. Our Consumers are our biggest supporters and living examples of how CDChoices empowers independence every day. On behalf of everyone at CDChoices, we thank you for letting us be part of your success.

Renewed Strategic Plan: Looking Back to Move Forward

While this past year has presented many challenges, the wisdom of learning from past experiences is undeniable. The events of 2020, and in particular the impact of the coronavirus, has underscored the critical importance of CDPA and other home and community-based services. There is abundant evidence that CDPA and the self-directed model have greater interest and momentum than ever before as the community seeks a better way forward for long-term care. If COVID-19 taught us anything, institutional care puts people at more risk. The coronavirus has also highlighted the importance of our essential workers, which has and will continue to be at the forefront of our advocacy. We are actively working with the State Legislature to support rate increases for home care workers, so they are paid 150% of the minimum wage. This campaign is called the Fair Pay for Home Care Act (#FairPay4HomeCare) and legislation has been introduced by Assemblyman Richard Gottfried and Senator Rachel May. New York must view long-term care as an investment not an expense.

As we move forward, CDChoices is focused on the following areas:

- Wage Rate Increases: The CDChoices Board is made up of Consumers and Designated Representatives who are powerful advocates for you. Our primary focus is your workers' wages and doing everything we can to increase your wage band ceilings. Over the last several months we've implemented an essential-only spending plan aimed at administrative and general costs efficiency while fighting for wage increases by negotiating with our Managed Care partners. Our efforts have resulted in wage band ceilings that will be increased in April or early May 2021.
- Recruitment and Retention: We have made significant investments in our technology infrastructure to increase the recruitment and retention of your workers. Our online workforce recruitment website, www.PAChoices.com, will be enhanced so this valuable resource can better help you search for Personal Assistant workers. Our goal is to make the secure portal more accessible, user friendly and significantly increase and attract more potential workers from which you can recruit. Additionally, we are focusing our efforts on launching a self-service portal to make it easier and more streamlined for you and your workers to complete onboarding and hiring paperwork. CDChoices will continue to streamline the electronic visit verification (EVV) system you and your workers are using by focusing our efforts on enhancing the user experience and making it as non-invasive as possible.
- Advisory Group: Later this year, I will be forming both a Consumer and Personal Assistant advisory group. A communication will be sent to each of you to seek your interest and nomination for Personal Assistants. Making myself accessible to all of you is of great importance. Your voice and opinions will be heard – “nothing about us without us.”
- Growth: CDChoices is in the final stages of transitioning Consumers from Community, Works, and Independence, our FI collaborating partner based in Glens Falls, to CDChoices. It's imperative that CDChoices continues to add Consumers, and you can help as brand ambassadors. Brand advocacy begins with you, your Personal Assistants, and your family and friends. Word of mouth marketing helps build the CDChoices brand and relationships. Encouraging and recommending CDPA and endorsing CDChoices will further help us achieve economies of scale as New York State continues to lower reimbursement. We ask you to share your experience with others in need of CDPA and spread the word about CDChoices. Please join, share, and follow CDChoices on our social media pages: Facebook™, Twitter™, Instagram™, and LinkedIn™. You can also have an impact by posting your positive experiences on Google or Yelp. Your message may make the difference in someone choosing CDChoices as their FI.
- Customer Service: Investments to ensure consumer satisfaction will be made this year to create a positive experience each time you or your workers contact CDChoices. Quality assurance will be tracked and monitored. Consumer satisfaction surveys will be sent this year so CDChoices can advance and improve our customer service goals and objectives.

A little about me: Life is About the Choices You Make

As I matured in my teenage years, deciding what to do when I grew up was difficult until life handed me a situation that became a defining moment. During my first year attending college, I was diagnosed with an illness ultimately leading to a major surgery at 21 years old, and as a result, required rehabilitation and short-term home care. The sudden lifestyle change resulted in significant weight loss, lack of mobility, and the need for personal care. The experience provided me an unusual lens into the reality of what it's like to have a total stranger come into your home, touch your body, and help you care for yourself. Ultimately, my health improved, but the entire experience left a permanent impression and motivated me to choose a career in serving others that require home care. My life found a new purpose.

I chose to attend Siena College for a Finance degree while working on the side as a manager at The Snowman in Troy, a historic walk-up, homemade ice cream stand founded in the early 1950s. I also interned at Kinney and Associates, a government and professional services company that provides program management, consulting, and technology services to both local and federal governments. After graduating college, I knew CDChoices was the place I wanted to spend my career, starting as a Bookkeeper, promoted to Accountant, then to Chief Financial Officer in 2011, before recently becoming CEO. CDChoices means so much to me personally, not only because the mission aligns with my fundamental values and beliefs, but because of the experience I gained witnessing the passion and inspiration of the late Constance Laymon, CDChoices founder, and former CEO. She was a mentor and a friend.

Continuing Constance's legacy is no small feat. Constance was a fierce advocate having a dream of self-direction for everyone, and CDChoices remains committed to her goals and vision.

I'm originally from Troy, New York, and when I was younger, I enjoyed collecting and trading sports cards with friends, as well as fishing and playing baseball. I'm close with my family, who all work in health and human services. My mother is a retired secretary to the executive principal at Troy High School, and my father a retired controller. I have three older siblings. My sister is a special education pre-school teacher at A Child's Place, part of Unity House, my oldest brother is a senior caseworker at Rensselaer County Department of Social Services, Adult Protective Unit, and my other brother is a Research Scientist at Dartmouth College, specializing in therapeutics for neurodegenerative diseases with a focus on ALS and Alzheimer's disease.

As important as family is to me, so too is the incredible bond I share with my wife, who I met at CDChoices and who for several years worked as a Personal Assistant for a CDChoices Consumer enrolled in CDPA. My wife and I are expecting our first child, a boy, in June. As you can see, CDChoices is far more than a place I come to work each day. It means everything to me, and I will work to all ends to support self-direction, the independent living philosophy, and to protect, improve, and promote the health, productivity, and well-being of people with disabilities and seniors in need of personal care.

I am grateful for the opportunity to support, serve, and work with you into the future with promise and fulfillment. We all have a part in fulfilling our mission, and together we will continue scaling to new heights. I wish you good health and happiness.

Sincerely,



Christopher Graber
Chief Executive Officer