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LETIZIA TAGLIAFIERRO
INSPECTOR GENERAL

November 19, 2020

Theodore Kastner, M.D., M.S.
Commissioner
New York State Office for People
With Developmental Disabilities
44 Holland Avenue
Albany, New York 12229

Re: NYS IG 0872-031-2019

Dear Commissioner Kastner:

On March 13, 2019, the New York State Office of the Attorney General referred a complaint to the Office of the New York State Inspector General in which [REDACTED] [REDACTED] an employee of the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), alleged misconduct including bid rigging and theft from residents of OPWDD's [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] by [REDACTED], the house director. While the Inspector General's investigation found these allegations to be unsubstantiated, the investigation uncovered a lack of required documentation related to the withdrawal of \$800 from the spending account of a resident of [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

While investigating the complaint, the Inspector General reviewed personal spending account records of [REDACTED] resident [REDACTED]. This

review revealed a November 14, 2018 withdrawal of \$800 from his personal spending account, which lacked any receipts or other supporting documentation as required by OPWDD policy. According to these records, the \$800 was to be used for Christmas and personal clothing shopping.

OPWDD Business Officer [REDACTED] advised the Inspector General that on November 14, 2018, OPWDD issued a check from [REDACTED] account to OPWDD Direct Support Assistant [REDACTED], who was supposed to cash the check on [REDACTED] behalf, assist [REDACTED] with the purchases, and provide OPWDD with receipts documenting the purchases. [REDACTED] provided the Inspector General with a copy of the canceled check that had been issued to [REDACTED] which showed that [REDACTED] signed and cashed the check at a SEFCU branch, where [REDACTED] has a bank account, on December 12, 2018.

The Inspector General reviewed records for [REDACTED] SEFCU account but found no evidence that the check or resulting cash was deposited into this account.

Given the above findings, I have determined that this matter is more appropriate for OPWDD to address. Specifically, OPWDD should attempt to determine whether the \$800 provided to [REDACTED] was in fact used to purchase Christmas gifts and personal clothing for [REDACTED]. In addition, I recommend that OPWDD review its process for reconciling purchases made by staff for residents of its community homes to protect the finances of residents and ensure accountability. Therefore, I am referring this matter to your office for review and appropriate action.

Please advise me of any action taken by OPWDD in response to this referral within 45 days of the date of this letter. If you require further information, please contact Deputy Inspector General Jeffrey Hagen at 716.847.7118.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Letizia Tagliafierro
Inspector General

Cc: Willow Baer, Esq.
General Counsel