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Coalition for Choice Launched to Address and Advocate for Consumer Choice and Control

Philadelphia, PA – April 25, 2023 –A group of organizations has come together to form The Coalition for Choice (CFC) with a mission to develop and advance self-directed programs of community-based long-term services and supports for Medicaid-eligible people with disabilities and seniors. The group strives to influence public policy in support of their key principles: inclusion, true choice, true control, community integration, and empowerment for individuals receiving long-term services and supports (LTSS) in Pennsylvania.

The Coalition for Choice (CFC) has submitted a response to the Request For Information (RFI) issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) on March 6, 2023. The RFI is the initial step in the Department's development of a new procurement for managed care organizations that provide the services and supports in the Community HealthChoices program. The Coalition's response is available on our website, <https://coalitionforchoicepa.com/>.

While the Coalition for Choice supports many components of the Community HealthChoices program that has been in operation since 2018, the group argues that the program would be improved for participants with disabilities by ensuring true choice and control over services. The group's response to the RFI includes urging changes to self-directed program models that entail providing choice of multiple qualified providers. CFC expresses concerns regarding the current practice of one Financial Management Services entity and the proposed use of one state-procured vendor for Agency With Choice, which they believe erodes choice and control, as there is reduced recourse when services are unsatisfactory.

Joan W. Martin, a spokesperson for CFC, stated, "I am excited about the opportunity to work with this group of committed organizations and associations to help focus their

message to positively impact true consumer choice and control in program design. The Coalition for Choice will work collaboratively with policy-makers and allies to build support for choice of qualified providers in self-directed services”.

Additionally, The Coalition for Choice expressed some concerns about the current RFI process, specifically the absence of a mechanism for response to stakeholder concerns and suggestions. They suggest that the Department hold another round of listening sessions, as they did during the development of CHC, to gather feedback from stakeholders about programs, approaches, and policies that would improve services across the Commonwealth.

"Administrative and systemic efficiencies can be optimized in a manner that preserves true participant choice and self-direction. These fundamental independent living principles and important business goals can and must coexist as HCBS/MLTSS continues to expand in Pennsylvania and nationwide," stated Thomas Earle, CEO of Liberty Resources Inc, a leader in consumer advocacy in Pennsylvania. He continued "The Coalition also emphasizes the importance of participants having the ability to exercise true choice and control over their services and not having those choices limited by administrative efficiencies."

About the Coalition for Choice

The Coalition for Choice is an unincorporated group of organizations dedicated to the development and advancement of self-directed, community-based long-term care services and supports for Medicaid-eligible people with disabilities and seniors in Pennsylvania. The Coalition is committed to ensuring meaningful participant input and the promotion of inclusion, true choice, control, community integration, and empowerment. Additional information is available at <https://coalitionforchoicepa.com/>

Members of the Coalition for Choice include: Center for Independent Living of Central PA, Liberty Resources, PA Council on Independent Living, Pennsylvania Council on Independent Living (PCIL), PA Association of Home and Community Based Service Providers (PA-HCBS), PALCO, Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association(RCPA), Roads to Freedom Center for Independent Living, TEAM Services Group, Voices for Independence and XtraGlobex, Inc.

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