



Aetna to Provide Emergency Relief to Members Affected by HIV/AIDS Privacy Breach

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PHILADELPHIA (Sept. 29, 2017) – Aetna announced yesterday that it is now offering emergency relief for individuals harmed by Aetna’s mailing in July 2017 that disclosed information about HIV/AIDS medication through a large transparent window on the envelope.

The emergency relief program offers cash reimbursement to individuals who have incurred financial hardship as a result of the breach, for example, because they have been forced to move, or forced to incur other out-of-pocket expenses as a result of others learning that they are taking HIV/AIDS medication. In addition, the emergency relief program offers up to three free counseling sessions to individuals and their family members who request counseling as a result of the breach.

The emergency relief program was developed by Aetna with input from attorneys at the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania, the Legal Action Center, and the Philadelphia law firm Berger & Montague, P.C., who together are prosecuting a class action case related to the privacy breach on behalf of approximately 12,000 affected individuals in the United States. That lawsuit, captioned *Beckett v. Aetna, Inc., et al.*, No. 2:17-cv-03864-JS (E.D. Pa.), was filed on August 28, 2017 in the U.S District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

The emergency relief program grew out of the concern that the privacy breach may result in immediate harm to certain individuals that could not wait until the end of the lawsuit. “We view this emergency relief program simply as a way to reach Aetna members who, as a result of the breach, may need immediate crisis counseling or financial relief,” said Ronda B. Goldfein, an attorney and Executive Director of the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania. “The

establishment of this program is the beginning and not the end of the case we are prosecuting. The program does not involve any legal releases of claims by participants. It is simply a way to address emergency needs of people harmed by the breach.”

Because of the sensitive nature of the program and the fact that affected individuals may not want to deal with Aetna directly, the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania and the Legal Action Center have agreed to assist people in submitting requests for emergency relief. The AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania and the Legal Action Center are nonprofit law firms that represent persons living with HIV/AIDS.

“Since the breach occurred in July 2017, we have heard from hundreds of people who have been harmed,” Goldfein added. “We encourage anyone who received and would like to discuss Aetna’s mailing to contact us, and we can advise them regarding their legal claims.”

“We will continue to vigorously prosecute the class action lawsuit to ensure that the thousands of individuals harmed by this privacy breach receive justice,” said Sally Friedman, Legal Director of the Legal Action Center. “Aetna’s mailing caused serious harm and forever altered class members’ relationships with family, friends, and neighbors.”

New York residents who require emergency relief should contact the Legal Action Center at 212-243-1313 or lacinfo@lac.org. All other affected individuals in the United States should contact the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania at 215-587-9377 or aetnaclass@aidslawpa.org. Importantly, participants who request and accept the immediate relief will not release any legal claims by doing so.

Founded in 1988, the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania (www.aidslawpa.org) is the nation’s only independent nonprofit public-interest law firm providing free legal services to people living with HIV and AIDS and those affected by the epidemic.

Established in 1973, the Legal Action Center (www.lac.org) is the nation’s only nonprofit law and policy organization whose sole mission is to fight discrimination against people with histories of addiction, HIV/AIDS, or criminal records, and to advocate for sound public policies.

Berger & Montague, P.C. (www.bergermontague.com) is a national plaintiffs' law firm headquartered in Philadelphia with additional offices in Minneapolis and Washington, D.C. The firm has played lead roles in major cases for over 47 years, resulting in recoveries of over \$30 billion for its clients and the classes they have represented. Attorneys Shanon Carson, E. Michelle Drake, Sarah R. Schalman-Bergen, and John Albanese are prosecuting the Aetna privacy breach class action case.

Additional information about Aetna's emergency relief program and the lawsuit is available at www.aidslawpa.org.

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