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Office of Income Maintenance
Bureau of Public Welfare

Edward J. Zogby, Director
Bureau of Policy
4th Floor, Health and Welfare Bldg.
Harrisburg, PA 17105

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May 24, 2010

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

REFER TO: _____

Dear Mr. Zogby,

Dress for Success South Central PA, a 501(c)3 organization, ~~proposed~~ and launched the very first "clothing allowance" alternative pilot program in partnership with the PA Department of Public Welfare's Bureau of Employment and Training Program in October 2007. This program focused on women moving from "welfare to work" as a pilot project for Dauphin and York Counties. Dress for Success South Central PA agreed to provide, *free to the client and State*, gently used and /or new donated interview suits and business attire for employment in exchange for operational funding support from the PA Department of Welfare. We were also able to devise a successful method of service delivery that would support items that are generally not able to be secured through our donors, such as scrubs, plus size clothing, large size shoes, slip proof/steel toed shoes along with other types of uniform clothing with a separate budget line designation covering "purchased items". We were able to prove that Dress for Success could provide a high quality program that addressed the flaws that existed in the former clothing allowance program.

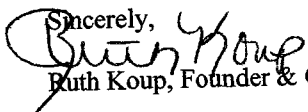
Our pilot program funding was called the "PA Working Wardrobe" and is now known as the PA WORKWEAR, which ultimately replaced most categories of the PA Welfare clothing allowance program. The goal of the pilot program was to prove and develop a model of service delivery that would offer cost containment, elimination of fraud/misuse as well as the overuse of the clothing allowance program by Welfare clients that were seeking state money for securing employment attire. Dress for Success South Central PA is part of an international non-profit organization with high standards of accountability and requires annual reports. As an organization, it promotes the career development and the goal of self-sufficiency for each client as a global initiative.

Dress for Success South Central PA proposed the concept of supporting the interview process by providing one interview suit that could be used by the client for numerous interviews and to provide a working wardrobe for the employment process. We found that women who really wanted the work attire came to the appointments for the clothing and those that were seeking "cash" eventually stopped asking for the "clothing allowance" when they learned that they would be receiving clothing. The ability to defraud welfare was contained with Dress for Success methods and the quality of what we offer exceeds expectations. Our program offered a sophisticated data base system, with the ability to track and maintain records on each client referred that includes detailed information about the items distributed, as well as the ability to run advance query data analysis. We maintain secure referral records, purchase receipts, retain the original (paper) annual appointment calendars and database.

The pilot program was "rolled out" to over 30 counties in PA in 2008 based on our work with BETP. We cannot speak to the quality, data control or fiscal accountability of other programs but we do know that Dress for Success standards helped to establish and define the guidelines referred to in the current PAWORKWEAR Program. Certainly, Dress for Success South Central PA has a proven record of accomplishment that has saved the taxpayer millions of dollars through our efforts. In April, Senator Pat Vance informed a group that the success of our pilot program translated into saving the Commonwealth over 17 million dollars, an awesome achievement.

Dress for Success South Central PA has received international recognition and many local awards for the pilot program and related projects. In 2009, we rolled out the very first Mobile Suiting Program pilot, partial funded by the PA WORKWEAR, reaching out to rural county areas in Perry, Cumberland and Adams. Dress for Success South Central PA has served over 2900 women as of May 2010. We are pleased and proud to be the founder of the PA WORKWEAR project and feel that we can still serve as role model for PA WORKWEAR to improve accountability efforts as this program moves forward and a good model for other "special allowance" initiatives.

Dress for Success South Central PA supports the PA Dept. of Welfare's efforts of cost containment. Clearly, they are utilizing lessons learned through our program that provided the most recent effective welfare reform. In our case, clients have adjusted to PA WORKWEAR program guidelines that have set limits. The proposed regulations will help provide cost savings and accountability to the taxpayers. We support the concept of welfare to work to achieve self-sufficiency through employment and find the reforms necessary to achieve that goal.

Sincerely,

Ruth Koups, Founder & CEO

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