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September 13, 2023

Dear Friends, Donors, Clients, Stakeholders and Community Members,

We write to you as the Board of Directors of Gateway Community Services Maine, to respond to disturbing and false comments made by a particular individual and communicated broadly by that person to many of you. We write as a group with a fiduciary duty to act in the best interest of the organization, clients, and community we serve. We write to state emphatically and categorically that we believe that the claims being communicated are false, and that Gateway remains in the hands of a talented and dedicated team of professionals, including its founder and current CEO, Abdullahi Ali.

Gateway was founded in 2014 by Abdullahi Ali, who made his way to the United States from Somalia and then from the world's largest refugee camp, Dadaab, in Kenya. Abdullahi wanted to be directly involved in providing support to his community, and he founded Gateway Community Services, which began operations in late 2015, with a small office in Portland, a handful of case managers and counselors, and a small team of language interpreters. In less than a decade, Gateway has grown from a staff of less than 20 people to more than 200. We also have over 40 volunteers, five programs operating in four office locations, and provide services to over 1000 clients annually with our sister non-profit sister agency, Gateway Community Services, Maine (GCSM).

GCSM reaches over 400 youth and 700 adults annually through its Wellness, Leadership and Community Programming areas. In 2019, Maine Magazine named Abdullahi as one of the "50 Mainers Creating a Brighter Future for the State" and in 2020, he was honored with the Metamorphosis Award for his work in engaging youth in their communities. In 2023, Abdullahi was chosen as the recipient of the Maine Black Excellence Award: Community Bow and Stern, for Best All Around Excellence in Leadership and Advocacy.

With a leadership team comprised almost exclusively of women and/or BIPOC individuals, Gateway provides services in twenty-five languages to individuals from over twenty countries, including the United States -- roughly 50% of the people served by Gateway are native-born/English-speaking people. The breadth of services used, and changes made possible are astonishing to Gateway's clientele, and we see it as our ongoing privilege to continue to be a catalyst for such amazing improvements in the lives and the communities of those we serve.

Unfortunately, as part of what we see as a personal vendetta against a group of people, including Abdullahi, who have sought to call out his false claims and his hateful rhetoric about certain

marginalized members of our communities, a person named Abdi Iftin has written to many of you, making claims about Abdullahi and Gateway that are simply not true. We want to assure you that Gateway Community Services is being operated ethically and its resources are managed responsibly. We have undergone a routine financial audit in 2021 and were found to be in compliance with all applicable financial, legal and ethical standards. We note that Mr. Iftin has at times written under a pseudonym and claimed to represent a group of people, all in a poor attempt to hide the true source of his false statements.

Mr. Iftin's misrepresentation of the facts includes his provision of a Portland Press Herald article that mentions a legal case against four Iraqi businessmen and which Mr. Iftin claims implicates Gateway and Abdullahi. We want to set the record straight that in 2020 Abdullahi, as the chairperson of New Mainers' Association of Business owners and Service Providers, did attempt to mediate a dispute among a dozen or more agencies. Four of those involved in the dispute were charged with misconduct that was alleged to have occurred prior to Abdullahi's mediation attempts. Neither Abdullahi nor Gateway were ever charged with any wrongdoing. In March 2023, the four Iraqi men charged were acquitted by a jury of all charges. Mr. Iftin surely knows this but persists in painting a false and disparaging picture of Gateway and Abdullahi. We remain steadfast in our commitment to Gateway, Abdullahi, our clients, our communities, and the State of Maine. We thank you for your continued support of our vital mission. Please let us know if you would like to discuss any concerns you may have.

John Ochira- Board President

Marcelle Medford, PhD- Board Vice President

Yahye Hussein- Board Treasurer

Caroline Sample- Board Secretary

Hermeet Kohli, PhD, MSW- Board Member

Yussuf Abdi, P.A.- Board Member

Joe Marro- Board Member, and former Board President

John Bauer, MSc. - Board Member and former Board Treasurer

Ragini Malhotra, MA, PhD- Board Member

Our website: <https://gcsmaine.org/>