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July 26, 2024

VIA EMAIL (Idtheft@oag.state.md.us)

Anthony Brown
Office of the Attorney General
St. Paul Plaza
Attn: Security Breach Notification
200 St. Paul Place
Baltimore, MD 21202

Re: The Godwin Firm, P.A. – Incident Notification

Dear Mr. Brown:

McDonald Hopkins PLC represents the Godwin Firm, P.A. (“the Godwin Firm”). I am writing to provide notification of an incident at the Godwin Firm that may affect the security of personal information of approximately two hundred and fifty six (256) Maryland residents. By providing this notice, the Godwin Firm does not waive any rights or defenses regarding the applicability of Maryland law or personal jurisdiction.

On March 1, 2024, the Godwin Firm was subject to a sophisticated cybersecurity incident. As a result of the incident, an unauthorized actor temporarily obtained access to part of the Godwin Firm’s computer network. Upon learning of this issue, the Godwin Firm commenced a prompt and thorough investigation with external cybersecurity professionals experienced in handling these types of situations to help determine whether any personal information was compromised as a result of the incident. After an extensive forensic investigation and manual document review, the Godwin Firm determined on July 15, 2024 that the impacted systems contained personal information. The information impacted included individuals’ name, SSN, Tax ID Number, Driver’s License Number, and Financial Account Information. Upon this discovery, the Godwin Firm promptly proceeded to notify impacted individuals.

The Godwin Firm wanted to inform you (and the affected residents) of the incident and to explain the steps that it is taking to help safeguard the affected residents against identity fraud. The Godwin Firm is providing the affected residents with written notification of this incident commencing on or about July 26, 2024 in substantially the same form as the letter attached hereto. The Godwin Firm is offering the residents with Social Security numbers impacted a complimentary one-year membership with a credit monitoring service.

At the Godwin Firm, protecting the privacy of personal information is a top priority. The Godwin Firm is committed to maintaining the privacy of personal information in its possession

and has taken many precautions to safeguard it. The Godwin Firm continually evaluates and modifies its practices to enhance the security and privacy of the personal information it maintains.

If you have any additional questions, please contact me at (248) 220-1356 or dpaluzzi@mcdonaldhopkins.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dom Paluzzi", is positioned above the printed name.

Dominic A. Paluzzi

Encl.

The Godwin Firm PA
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

Secure Processing Center
P.O. Box 3826
Suwanee, GA 30024

Postal Endorsement Line

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

<<Date>>

IMPORTANT INFORMATION PLEASE REVIEW CAREFULLY

Dear [REDACTED]:

At The Godwin Firm, P.A. ("The Godwin Firm"), maintaining our clients' trust and protecting our clients' personal information are among our highest priorities. We are writing with important information regarding a recent data security incident. We want to provide information about the incident, explain the services we are making available to you, and let you know that we continue to take significant measures to protect your information.

What Happened?

On March 1, 2024, the Godwin Firm was subject to a sophisticated cybersecurity incident. As a result of the incident, an unauthorized actor temporarily obtained access to part of the Godwin Firm's computer network.

What We Are Doing.

Upon learning of this issue, the Godwin Firm commenced a prompt and thorough investigation with external cybersecurity professionals experienced in handling these types of situations to help determine whether any personal information was compromised as a result of the incident. After an extensive forensic investigation and manual document review, the Godwin Firm determined on July 15, 2024 that the impacted systems contained your personal information.

What Information Was Involved?

The impacted information contained some of your personal information, specifically, your full name [REDACTED].

What You Can Do...

To protect you and your information, we are providing you with [REDACTED] months of free credit monitoring and identity theft protection services through Equifax Credit Watch™ Gold. This service helps detect possible misuse of your information and provides you with identity protection services focused on immediate identification and resolution of identity theft. This service is completely free to you and enrolling in this program will not hurt your credit score. For more information on identity theft prevention, including instructions on how to activate your complimentary [REDACTED] month membership, please see the additional information provided in this letter.

This letter also provides other precautionary measures you can take to protect your information, including placing a fraud alert and/or security freeze on your credit files, obtaining a free credit report, and/or reporting fraudulent activity to the IRS. Additionally, you should always remain vigilant in reviewing your financial account statements and credit reports for fraudulent or irregular activity on a regular basis.

For More Information.

We regret any inconvenience that this may cause you. We are committed to maintaining the privacy of personal information in our possession and have taken many precautions to safeguard it. We continually evaluate and modify our practices and internal controls to enhance the security and privacy of your personal information.

If you have any further questions regarding this incident, please call us at [REDACTED] Monday through Friday, 9 [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Eastern Time, excluding holidays.

Sincerely,
The Godwin Firm, P.A.

- OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION -

1. Enrolling in Complimentary [REDACTED] Month Credit Monitoring.

Go [REDACTED]

Enter your unique Activation Code of [REDACTED] then click "Submit" and follow these 4 steps:

1. Register:

Complete the form with your contact information and click "Continue".

If you already have a [REDACTED] account, click the 'Sign in here' link under the "Let's get started" header.

Once you have successfully signed in, you will skip to the Checkout Page in Step 4

2. Create Account:

Enter your email address, create a password, and accept the terms of use.

3. Verify Identity:

To enroll in your product, we will ask you to complete our identity verification process.

4. Checkout:

Upon successful verification of your identity, you will see the Checkout Page.

Click 'Sign Me Up' to finish enrolling.

You're done!

The confirmation page shows your completed enrollment.

Click "View My Product" to access the product features.

2. Placing a Fraud Alert on Your Credit File.

Whether or not you choose to use the complimentary [REDACTED] month credit monitoring services, we recommend that you place an initial one-year "fraud alert" on your credit files, at no charge. A fraud alert tells creditors to contact you personally before they open any new accounts. To place a fraud alert, call any one of the three major credit bureaus at the numbers listed below. As soon as one credit bureau confirms your fraud alert, they will notify the others.

Equifax

P.O. Box 105069

Atlanta, GA 30348-5069

<https://www.equifax.com/personal/credit-report-services/credit-fraud-alerts/>

(800) 525-6285

Experian

P.O. Box 9554

Allen, TX 75013

<https://www.experian.com/fraud/center.html>

(888) 397-3742

TransUnion

Fraud Victim Assistance

Department

P.O. Box 2000

Chester, PA 19016-2000

<https://www.transunion.com/fraud-alerts>

(800) 680-7289

3. Placing a Security Freeze on Your Credit File.

If you are very concerned about becoming a victim of fraud or identity theft, you may request a "security freeze" be placed on your credit file, at no charge. A security freeze prohibits, with certain specific exceptions, the consumer reporting agencies from releasing your credit report or any information from it without your express authorization. You may place a security freeze on your credit report by contacting all three nationwide credit reporting companies at the numbers below and following the stated directions or by sending a request in writing, by mail, to all three credit reporting companies:

Equifax Security Freeze

P.O. Box 105788

Atlanta, GA 30348

<https://www.equifax.com/personal/credit-report-services/credit-freeze/>

(800) 349-9960

(888) 298-0045

Experian Security Freeze

P.O. Box 9554

Allen, TX 75013

<http://experian.com/freeze>

(888) 397-3742

TransUnion Security Freeze

P.O. Box 160

Woodlyn, PA 19094

<https://www.transunion.com/credit-freeze>

(888) 909-8872

In order to place the security freeze, you'll need to supply your name, address, date of birth, Social Security number and other personal information. After receiving your freeze request, each credit reporting company will send you a confirmation letter containing a unique PIN (personal identification number) or password. Keep the PIN or password in a safe place. You will need it if you choose to lift the freeze.

If you do place a security freeze *prior* to enrolling in the credit monitoring service as described above, you will need to remove the freeze in order to sign up for the credit monitoring service. After you sign up for the credit monitoring service, you may refreeze your credit file.

4. Obtaining a Free Credit Report.

Under federal law, you are entitled to one free credit report every 12 months from each of the above three major nationwide credit reporting companies. Call **1-877-322-8228** or request your free credit reports online at **www.annualcreditreport.com**. Once you receive your credit reports, review them for discrepancies. Identify any accounts you did not open or inquiries from creditors that you did not authorize. Verify all information is correct. If you have questions or notice incorrect information, contact the credit reporting company.

5. Additional Helpful Resources.

Even if you do not find any suspicious activity on your initial credit reports, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) recommends that you check your credit reports periodically. Checking your credit report periodically can help you spot problems and address them quickly.

If you find suspicious activity on your credit reports or have reason to believe your information is being misused, call your local law enforcement agency and file a police report. Be sure to obtain a copy of the police report, as many creditors will want the information it contains to absolve you of the fraudulent debts. You may also file a complaint with the FTC by contacting them on the web at www.ftc.gov/idtheft, by phone at 1-877-IDTHEFT (1-877-438-4338), or by mail at Federal Trade Commission, Consumer Response Center, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20580. Your complaint will be added to the FTC's Identity Theft Data Clearinghouse, where it will be accessible to law enforcement for their investigations. In addition, you may obtain information from the FTC about fraud alerts and security freezes.

If this notice letter states that your financial account information and/or credit or debit card information was impacted, we recommend that you contact your financial institution to inquire about steps to take to protect your account, including whether you should close your account or obtain a new account number.

If your personal information has been used to file a false tax return, to open an account or to attempt to open an account in your name or to commit fraud or other crimes against you, you may file a police report in the city in which you currently reside.

6. Reporting Identity Fraud to the IRS.

If your attempt to file your federal tax returns electronically was rejected or if you received a notice from the IRS indicating someone was otherwise using your Social Security number, it is recommended that you do the following:

- **File an Identity Theft Affidavit (Form 14039) with the IRS (the form can be downloaded at: <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f14039.pdf>)**
 - *Instructions for Form 14039* – In Section A check box 1. / In Section B check box 2. / Insert this in the "Please provide an explanation" box: I receive notice that my name and Social Security number may have been used to file a fraudulent tax return that was accepted by the IRS and/or state tax agency.
 - This form should be mailed or faxed to the IRS: Internal Revenue Service, Fresno, CA 93888-0025; 855-807-5720
- Call the IRS at (800) 908-4490, ext. 245 to report the situation (the unit office is open Monday through Friday from 7 am to 7 pm); and/or
- File a police report with your local police department. It may be appropriate to provide a copy of this letter.

Additional information regarding preventing tax-related identity theft can be found at: <http://www.irs.gov/uac/Identity-Protection>.

For further information and guidance from the IRS about tax-related identity theft, please visit: <https://www.irs.gov/uac/taxpayer-guide-to-identity-theft> (Taxpayer Guide to Identity Theft) and <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p5027.pdf> (IRS Publication 5027, Identity Theft Information for Taxpayers).

You may request an IRS Identity Protection PIN (IP PIN) at <https://www.irs.gov/identity-theft-fraud-scams/get-an-identity-protection-pin>. An IP PIN is a six-digit number that prevents someone else from filing a tax return using your Social Security number or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number. The IP PIN is known only to you and the IRS. It helps IRS verify your identity when you file your electronic or paper tax return.

Iowa Residents: You may contact law enforcement or the Iowa Attorney General's Office to report suspected incidents of identity Theft: Office of the Attorney General of Iowa, Consumer Protection Division, Hoover State Office Building, 1305 East Walnut Street, Des Moines, IA 50319, www.iowaattorneygeneral.gov, Telephone: 515-281-5164.

Maryland Residents: You may obtain information about avoiding identity theft from the Maryland Attorney General's Office: Office of the Attorney General of Maryland, Consumer Protection Division, 200 St. Paul Place, Baltimore, MD 21202, <https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/>, Telephone: 888-743-0023.

New York Residents: You may obtain information about preventing identity theft from the New York Attorney General's Office: Office of the Attorney General, The Capitol, Albany, NY 12224-0341; <https://ag.ny.gov/consumer-frauds-bureau/identity-theft>; Telephone: 800-771-7755.

North Carolina Residents: You may obtain information about preventing identity theft from the North Carolina Attorney General's Office: Office of the Attorney General of North Carolina, Consumer Protection Division, 9001 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-9001, www.ncdoj.gov/, Telephone: 877-566-7226 (Toll-free within North Carolina), 919-716-6000.

Oregon Residents: You may obtain information about preventing identity theft from the Oregon Attorney General's Office: Oregon Department of Justice, 1162 Court Street NE, Salem, OR 97301-4096, www.doj.state.or.us/, Telephone: 877-877-9392.

Washington D.C. Residents: You may obtain information about preventing identity theft from the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia, 400 6th Street NW, Washington D.C. 20001, <https://oag.dc.gov/consumer-protection>, Telephone: 202-442-9828.

New Mexico Residents: You have rights under the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA). These include, among others, the right to know what is in your file; to dispute incomplete or inaccurate information; and to have consumer reporting agencies correct or delete inaccurate, incomplete, or unverifiable information. For more information about the FCRA, please visit www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/pdf-0096-fair-credit-reporting-act.pdf or www.ftc.gov.

In Addition, New Mexico Consumers Have the Right to Obtain a Security Freeze or Submit a Declaration of Removal

As noted above, you may obtain a security freeze on your credit report to protect your privacy and ensure that credit is not granted in your name without your knowledge. You may submit a declaration of removal to remove information placed in your credit report as a result of being a victim of identity theft. You have a right to place a security freeze on your credit report or submit a declaration of removal pursuant to the Fair Credit Reporting and Identity Security Act.

The security freeze is designed to prevent credit, loans, and services from being approved in your name without your consent. When you place a security freeze on your credit report, you will be provided with a personal identification number, password, or similar device to use if you choose to remove the freeze on your credit report or to temporarily authorize the release of your credit report to a specific party or parties or for a specific period of time after the freeze is in place. To remove the freeze or to provide authorization for the temporary release of your credit report, you must contact the consumer reporting agency and provide all of the following:

1. The unique personal identification number, password, or similar device provided by the consumer reporting agency;
2. Proper identification to verify your identity; and
3. Information regarding the third party or parties who are to receive the credit report or the period of time for which the credit report may be released to users of the credit report.

A consumer reporting agency that receives a request from a consumer to lift temporarily a freeze on a credit report shall comply with the request no later than three business days after receiving the request. As of September 1, 2008, a consumer reporting agency shall comply with the request within fifteen minutes of receiving the request by a secure electronic method or by telephone.

A security freeze does not apply in all circumstances, such as where you have an existing account relationship and a copy of your credit report is requested by your existing creditor or its agents for certain types of account review, collection, fraud control, or similar activities; for use in setting or adjusting an insurance rate or claim or insurance underwriting; for certain governmental purposes; and for purposes of prescreening as defined in the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act.

If you are actively seeking a new credit, loan, utility, telephone, or insurance account, you should understand that the procedures involved in lifting a security freeze may slow your own applications for credit. You should plan ahead and lift a freeze, either completely if you are shopping around or specifically for a certain creditor, with enough advance notice before you apply for new credit for the lifting to take effect. You should contact a consumer reporting agency and request it to lift the freeze at least three business days before applying. As of September 1, 2008, if you contact a consumer reporting agency by a secure electronic method or by telephone, the consumer reporting agency should lift the freeze within fifteen minutes. You have a right to bring a civil action against a consumer reporting agency that violates your rights under the Fair Credit Reporting and Identity Security Act.

To place a security freeze on your credit report, you must send a request to each of the three major consumer reporting agencies: Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. You may contact these agencies using the contact information provided above.