

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
AUSTIN DIVISION**

GRANT JOHNSON, individually and on behalf of
himself and all others similarly situated,

Plaintiff,

v.

SYSINFORMATION HEALTHCARE SERVICES,
LLC d/b/a EQUALIZERCM AND 1ST
CREDENTIALING,

Defendant.

Case No.

CLASS ACTION

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

Plaintiff Grant Johnson (“Plaintiff”), on behalf of himself and all others similarly situated, alleges the following Class Action Complaint (the “Action”) against Defendant SysInformation Healthcare Services, LLC, D/B/A Equalizercm and 1st Credentialing, (“SysInformation” or “Defendant”) upon personal knowledge as to himself and his own actions, and upon information and belief, including the investigation of counsel as follows:

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Plaintiff seeks monetary damages and injunctive and declaratory relief arising from Defendant’s failure to safeguard the Personally Identifiable Information¹ (“PII”) and Protected

¹ The Federal Trade Commission (“FTC”) defines “identifying information” as “any name or number that may be used, alone or in conjunction with any other information, to identify a specific person,” including, among other things, “[n]ame, Social Security number, date of birth, official State or government issued driver’s license or identification number, alien registration number,

Health Information (“PHI”) (together, Private Information”) of its patients, which resulted in unauthorized access to its information systems between June 3, 2023 and June 18, 2023, and the compromised and unauthorized disclosure of that Private Information, causing widespread injury and damages to Plaintiff and the proposed (defined below) members.

2. Defendant, SysInformation, is a Texas corporation that "provides outsourced Revenue Cycle support to medical billing companies, Central Business Offices, hospitals, and other healthcare entities" throughout the United States.²

3. As explained in detail herein, Defendant detected unusual activity in its computer systems and ultimately determined that an unauthorized third party accessed its network and obtained certain files from its systems between June 3, 2023 and June 18, 2023 (“Data Breach”).³

4. As a result of the Data Breach, which Defendant failed to prevent, the Private Information of Defendant’s patients, including Plaintiff and the proposed Class members, were stolen, including their name, date of birth, and medical history/treatment information.⁴

5. Defendant’s investigation concluded that the Private Information compromised in the Data Breach included Plaintiff’s and other Class Members information (together, “Patients”).

6. Defendant’s failure to safeguard Patients highly sensitive Private Information as exposed and unauthorizedly disclosed in the Data Breach violates its common law duty, Texas law, and Defendant’s implied contract with its Patients to safeguard their Private Information.

7. Plaintiff and Class members now face a lifetime risk of identity theft due to the nature of the information lost, which they cannot change, and which cannot be made private again.

government passport number, employer or taxpayer identification number.”¹⁷ C.F.R. § 248.201(b)(8). To be clear, according to Defendant, not every type of information included in that definition was compromised in the subject data breach.

² <https://www.linkedin.com/company/sysinformation/> (last accessed Jun. 6, 2024)

³ Notice of Security Breach (“Notice”) sent by Defendant is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

⁴ *Id.*

8. As a result of the Data Breach, Plaintiff and Class Members suffered concrete injuries in fact including, but not limited to: (i) invasion of privacy; (ii) theft of their Private Information; (iii) lost or diminished value of Private Information; (iv) lost time and opportunity costs associated with attempting to mitigate the actual consequences of the Data Breach; (v) loss of benefit of the bargain; (vi) lost opportunity costs associated with attempting to mitigate the actual consequences of the Data Breach; (vii) actual misuse of their Private Information consisting of an increase in spam calls, texts, and/or emails; (viii) Plaintiff's Private Information being disseminated on the dark web, according to Experian; (ix) statutory damages; (x) nominal damages; and (xi) the continued and certainly increased risk to their Private Information, which:(a) remains unencrypted and available for unauthorized third parties to access and abuse; and (remains backed up in Defendant's possession and is subject to further unauthorized disclosures so long as Defendant fails to undertake appropriate and adequate measures to protect the Private Information.

9. The Data Breach was a direct result of Defendant's failure to implement adequate and reasonable cyber-security procedures and protocols necessary to protect its clients' patients' Private Information from a foreseeable and preventable cyber-attack.

10. Moreover, upon information and belief, Defendant was targeted for a cyber-attack due to its status as a healthcare entity that collects and maintains highly valuable Private Information on its systems.

11. On behalf of himself and the Class preliminarily defined below, Plaintiff brings causes of action against Defendant for negligence, negligence *per se*, breach of fiduciary duty, and breach of implied contract, seeking an award of monetary damages and injunctive and declaratory

relief, resulting from Defendant's failure to adequately protect their highly sensitive Private Information.

II. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

12. The Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this action under the Class Action Fairness Act, 28 U.S.C. § 1332(d)(2). The amount in controversy exceeds \$5 million, exclusive of interest and costs. The number of class members is over 100, and at least one Class member is a citizen of a state that is diverse from Defendant's citizenship, namely Plaintiff, a citizen of Kentucky. Thus, minimal diversity exists under 28 U.S.C. § 1332(d)(2)(A).

13. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant, SysInformation Healthcare Services, LLC, D/B/A Equalizercm and 1st Credentialing, because it is a corporation incorporated under the laws of Texas, has its principal place of business in Texas, and does a significant amount of business in Texas.

14. Venue is proper in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(a)(1) because Defendant has its principal place of business located in this District, and a substantial part of the events giving rise to this action occurred in this District.

III. PARTIES

15. Plaintiff is an individual citizen of Kentucky and received a Notice from Defendant dated May 23, 2024. Plaintiff was a patient of Defendant.

16. Defendant SysInformation Healthcare Services, LLC, D/B/A Equalizercm and 1st Credentialing, is a corporation organized under the laws of Texas with its headquarters and principal place of business at 3267 Bee Caves Rd, Ste 107-511, Austin, TX 78746-6700. The registered agent for service of Process is Nagi Roa, 3267 Bee Caves Road, Suite 107-511, Austin, Texas 78746

IV. FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

Defendant's Business

17. According to Defendant's website:

SysInformation provides outsourced Revenue Cycle support to medical billing companies, Central Business Offices, hospitals, and other healthcare entities through our secure U.S. and offshore operations. Our Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) services include medical coding, billing, accounts receivable management, claims processing and related services.⁵

18. Plaintiff and Class members are current or former patients of Defendant's clients who provided their Private Information to Defendant.

19. In the course of their relationship, patients, including Plaintiff and Class Members, provided Defendant with at least the following: names, dates of birth, medical history/treatment information, and other sensitive information.

20. Upon information and belief, in the course of collecting Private Information from its clients' patients, including Plaintiff, Defendant promised to provide confidentiality and adequate security for the data it collected from patients through its applicable privacy policy and through other disclosures in compliance with statutory privacy requirements.

21. Plaintiff and the Class Members, as patients at Defendant's clients, relied on these promises and on this sophisticated business entity to keep their sensitive Private Information confidential and securely maintained, to use this information for business purposes only, and to make only authorized disclosures of this information. Patients, in general, demand security to safeguard their Private Information, especially when their PHI and other sensitive Private Information is involved.

⁵ <https://www.linkedin.com/company/sysinformation/> (last accessed Jun. 6, 2024)

The Attack and Data Breach

22. On or about May 23, 2024, Defendant began notifying Plaintiff and other Data Breach victims of the Data Breach, informing them by Notice of Security Incident (“Notice”):

What Happened? June 2023, SysInformation discovered suspicious activity related to certain systems which resulted in a network outage. We immediately took steps to secure our environment and launched an investigation to determine the nature and scope of the activity. The investigation determined there was unauthorized access and/or acquisition of certain files and folders within our network between June 3, 2023 and June 18, 2023. As a result, SysInformation began an extensive review of these files and folders to determine whether sensitive information may be impacted.

What Information Was Involved? Our review determined that information related to certain individuals was present on the impacted systems. Following this determination, we undertook an in-depth review process to identify the individuals and SysInformation clients who were potentially impacted. SysInformation is notifying you now out of an abundance of caution because the investigation recently determined that certain information relating to you may have been within the accessed systems, including your name and date of birth and medical history/treatment information.⁶

23. Omitted from the Notice Letter were the identity of the cybercriminals who perpetrated this Data Breach, the details of the root cause of the Data Breach, the vulnerabilities exploited, and the remedial measures undertaken to ensure such a breach does not occur again. To date, these omitted details have not been explained or clarified to Plaintiff and Class Members, who retain a vested interest in ensuring that their Private Information remains protected.

⁶ Exhibit A.

24. This “disclosure” amounts to no real disclosure at all, as it fails to inform, with any degree of specificity, Plaintiff and Class Members of the Data Breach’s critical facts. Without these details, Plaintiff’s and Class Members’ ability to mitigate the harms resulting from the Data Breach is severely diminished.

25. Defendant had obligations created by the FTC Act, HIPAA, contract, common law, and industry standards to keep Plaintiff’s and Class Members’ Private Information confidential and to protect it from unauthorized access and disclosure.

26. The attacker accessed and acquired files in Defendant’s computer systems containing unencrypted Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members, including their name and date of birth and medical history/treatment information. Plaintiff’s and Class members’ Private Information was accessed and stolen in the Data Breach.

27. Plaintiff further believes his Private Information, and that of Class members, was subsequently sold on the dark web following the Data Breach, as that is the *modus operandi* of cybercriminals that commit cyber-attacks of this type.

Data Breaches Are Preventable

28. Defendant did not use reasonable security procedures and practices appropriate to the nature of the sensitive information they were maintaining for Plaintiff and Class Members, causing the exposure of Private Information, such as encrypting the information or deleting it when it is no longer needed.

29. Defendant could have prevented this Data Breach by, among other things, properly encrypting or otherwise protecting their equipment and computer files containing Private Information.

30. As explained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, “[p]revention is the most effective defense against ransomware and it is critical to take precautions for protection.”⁷

31. To prevent and detect cyber-attacks and/or ransomware attacks, Defendant could and should have implemented, as recommended by the United States Government, the following measures:

- Implement an awareness and training program. Because end users are targets, employees and individuals should be aware of the threat of ransomware and how it is delivered.
- Enable strong spam filters to prevent phishing emails from reaching the end users and authenticate inbound email using technologies like Sender Policy Framework (SPF), Domain Message Authentication Reporting and Conformance (DMARC), and DomainKeys Identified Mail (DKIM) to prevent email spoofing.
- Scan all incoming and outgoing emails to detect threats and filter executable files from reaching end users.
- Configure firewalls to block access to known malicious IP addresses.
- Patch operating systems, software, and firmware on devices. Consider using a centralized patch management system.
- Set anti-virus and anti-malware programs to conduct regular scans automatically.
- Manage the use of privileged accounts based on the principle of least privilege: no users should be assigned administrative access unless absolutely needed; and those with a need for administrator accounts should only use them when necessary.
- Configure access controls—including file, directory, and network share permissions—with least privilege in mind. If a user only needs to read specific files, the user should not have write access to those files, directories, or shares.
- Disable macro scripts from office files transmitted via email. Consider using Office Viewer software to open Microsoft Office files transmitted via email instead of full office suite applications.
- Implement Software Restriction Policies (SRP) or other controls to prevent programs from executing from common ransomware locations, such as temporary folders supporting popular Internet browsers or compression/decompression programs, including the AppData/LocalAppData folder.
- Consider disabling Remote Desktop protocol (RDP) if it is not being used.
- Use application whitelisting, which only allows systems to execute programs known and permitted by security policy.
- Execute operating system environments or specific programs in a virtualized environment.
- Categorize data based on organizational value and implement physical and logical

⁷ How to Protect Your Networks from RANSOMWARE, at 3, available at: <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/ransomware-prevention-and-response-for-cisos.pdf/view>

separation of networks and data for different organizational units.⁸

32. To prevent and detect cyber-attacks or ransomware attacks, Defendant could and should have implemented, as recommended by the Microsoft Threat Protection Intelligence Team, the following measures:

Secure Internet-Facing Assets

- Apply latest security updates
- Use threat and vulnerability management
- Perform regular audit; remove privileged credentials;
-

Thoroughly investigate and remediate alerts

- Prioritize and treat commodity malware infections as potential full compromise;
-

Include IT Pros in security discussions

- Ensure collaboration among [security operations], [security admins], and [information technology] admins to configure servers and other endpoints securely;
-

Build credential hygiene

- Use [multifactor authentication] or [network level authentication] and use strong, randomized, just-in-time local admin passwords;

Apply principle of least-privilege

- Monitor for adversarial activities
- Hunt for brute force attempts
- Monitor for cleanup of Event Logs
- Analyze logon events;
-

Harden infrastructure

- Use Windows Defender Firewall
- Enable tamper protection
- Enable cloud-delivered protection
- Turn on attack surface reduction rules and [Antimalware Scan Interface] for

⁸ *Id.* at 3-4.

Office[Visual Basic for Applications].⁹

33. Given that Defendant was storing the Private Information of its clients' current and former patients, Defendant could and should have implemented all of the above measures to prevent and detect cyberattacks.

34. The occurrence of the Data Breach indicates that Defendant failed to adequately implement one or more of the above measures to prevent cyberattacks, resulting in the Data Breach and data thieves acquiring and accessing the Private Information of, upon information and belief, thousands to tens of thousands of individuals, including that of Plaintiff and Class Members.

The Defendant Acquires, Collects, and Stores Plaintiff's and Class Members' Private Information

35. As a condition of becoming a patient at Defendant, Plaintiff and Class members were required to give their sensitive and confidential Private Information to Defendant.

36. Defendant retains and stores this information and derives a substantial economic benefit from the Private Information that it collects. But for the collection of Plaintiff's and Class members' Private Information, Defendant would be unable to perform its services.

37. By obtaining, collecting, and storing the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members, Defendant assumed legal and equitable duties and knew or should have known that they were responsible for protecting the Private Information from disclosure.

38. Plaintiff and Class members have taken reasonable steps to maintain the confidentiality of their Private Information and relied on Defendant to keep their Private Information confidential and maintained securely, to use this information for business purposes only, and to make only authorized disclosures of this information.

⁹ See Human-operated ransomware attacks: A preventable disaster (Mar 5, 2020), available at: <https://www.microsoft.com/security/blog/2020/03/05/human-operated-ransomware-attacks-a-preventable-disaster/>

39. Defendant could have prevented this Data Breach by properly securing and encrypting the files and file servers containing the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members.

40. Upon information and belief, Defendant made promises to Plaintiff and Class members to maintain and protect their Private Information, demonstrating an understanding of the importance of securing Private Information.

41. Defendant's negligence in safeguarding the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members is exacerbated by the repeated warnings and alerts directed to protecting and securing sensitive data.

Defendant Knew or Should Have Known of the Risk of a Cyber Attack Because Healthcare Entities in Possession of Private Information Are Particularly Susceptible to Cyber Attacks

42. Data thieves regularly target entities in the healthcare industry like Defendant due to the highly sensitive information that they maintain. Defendant knew and understood that unprotected Private Information is valuable and highly sought after by criminal parties who seek to illegally monetize that Private Information through unauthorized access.

43. Defendant's data security obligations were particularly important given the substantial increase in cyber-attacks and/or data breaches targeting healthcare entities like Defendant that collect and store Private Information and other sensitive information, preceding the date of the Data Breach.

44. In light of recent high profile data breaches at other industry-leading companies, including, *e.g.*, Microsoft (250 million records, December 2019), Wattpad (268 million records, June 2020), Facebook (267 million users, April 2020), Estee Lauder (440 million records, January 2020), Whisper (900 million records, March 2020), and Advanced Info Service (8.3 billion

records, May 2020), Defendant knew or should have known that the Private Information that it collected and maintained would be targeted by cybercriminals.

45. For example, of the 1,862 recorded data breaches in 2021, 330 of them, or 17.7%, were in the medical or healthcare industry.¹⁰

46. The 330 breaches reported in 2021 exposed nearly 30 million sensitive records (28,045,658), compared to only 306 breaches that exposed nearly 10 million sensitive records (9,700,238) in 2020.¹¹

47. Entities in custody of PHI and/or medical information reported the largest number of data breaches among all measured sectors in 2022, with the highest rate of exposure per breach.¹² Indeed, when compromised, healthcare related data is among the most sensitive and personally consequential. A report focusing on healthcare breaches found the “average total cost to resolve an identity theft-related incident . . . came to about \$20,000,” and that victims were often forced to pay out of pocket costs for healthcare they did not receive in order to restore coverage.¹³ Almost 50 percent of the victims lost their healthcare coverage as a result of the incident, while nearly 30 percent said their insurance premiums went up after the event. 40 percent of the patients were never able to resolve their identity theft at all. Data breaches and identity theft have a crippling effect on individuals, and detrimentally impact the economy as a whole.¹⁴

¹⁰ 2021 Data Breach Annual Report (ITRC, Jan. 2022), <https://notified.idtheftcenter.org/s/>, at 6.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² See Identity Theft Resource Center, *2022 Annual Data Breach Report*, <https://www.idtheftcenter.org/publication/2022-data-breach-report/> (last accessed Feb. 13, 2024).

¹³ See Elinor Mills, *Study: Medical identity theft is costly for victims*, CNET (March 3, 2010), <https://www.cnet.com/news/study-medical-identity-theft-is-costly-for-victims/> (last accessed Feb 13, 2024).

¹⁴ *See id.*

48. Despite the prevalence of public announcements of data breach and data security compromises, Defendant failed to take appropriate steps to protect the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members from being compromised.

49. Defendant was, or should have been, fully aware of the unique type and the significant volume of data on Defendant's server(s), amounting to thousands of individuals' detailed Private Information, and, thus, the significant number of individuals who would be harmed by the exposure of the unencrypted data.

50. The injuries to Plaintiff and Class members were directly and proximately caused by Defendant's failure to implement or maintain adequate data security measures for the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members.

51. The ramifications of Defendant's failure to keep secure the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members are long lasting and severe. Once Private Information is stolen fraudulent use of that information and damage to victims may continue for years.

52. As a healthcare entity in possession of its Patients' Private Information, Defendant knew, or should have known, the importance of safeguarding the Private Information entrusted to it by Plaintiff and Class members and of the foreseeable consequences if its data security systems were breached. This includes the significant costs imposed on Plaintiff and Class members because of a breach. Nevertheless, Defendant failed to take adequate cybersecurity measures to prevent the Data Breach.

Defendant Failed to Comply with FTC Guidelines

53. The FTC has promulgated numerous guides for businesses that highlight the importance of implementing reasonable data security practices. According to the FTC, the need for data security should be factored into all business decision-making.

54. In 2016, the FTC updated its publication, *Protecting Personal Information: A Guide for Business*, which established cyber-security guidelines for businesses. These guidelines note that businesses should protect the personal customer information that they keep; properly dispose of personal information that is no longer needed; encrypt information stored on computer networks; understand their network's vulnerabilities; and implement policies to correct any security problems.¹⁵

55. The guidelines also recommend that businesses use an intrusion detection system to expose a breach as soon as it occurs; monitor all incoming traffic for activity indicating someone is attempting to hack the system; watch for large amounts of data being transmitted from the system; and have a response plan ready in the event of a breach.¹⁶

56. The FTC further recommends that companies not maintain Private Information longer than is needed for authorization of a transaction; limit access to sensitive data; require complex passwords to be used on networks; use industry-tested methods for security; monitor for suspicious activity on the network; and verify that third-party service providers have implemented reasonable security measures.

57. The FTC has brought enforcement actions against businesses for failing to adequately and reasonably protect customer data, treating the failure to employ reasonable and appropriate measures to protect against unauthorized access to confidential consumer data as an unfair act or practice prohibited by Section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act ("FTCA"), 15

¹⁵ *Protecting Personal Information: A Guide for Business*, FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION (2016), https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/documents/plain-language/pdf-0136_proteting-personal-information.pdf (last accessed Feb. 13, 2024).

¹⁶ *Id.*

U.S.C. § 45. Orders resulting from these actions further clarify the measures businesses must take to meet their data security obligations.

58. These FTC enforcement actions include actions against healthcare entities, like Defendant. *See, e.g., In the Matter of LabMD, Inc., a corp*, 2016-2 Trade Cas. (CCH) ¶ 79708, 2016 WL 4128215, at *32 (MSNET July 28, 2016) (“[T]he Commission concludes that LabMD’s data security practices were unreasonable and constitute an unfair act or practice in violation of Section 5 of the FTC Act.”).

59. Section 5 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45, prohibits “unfair . . . practices in or affecting commerce,” including, as interpreted and enforced by the FTC, the unfair act or practice by businesses, such as Defendant, of failing to use reasonable measures to protect Private Information. The FTC publications and orders described above also form part of the basis of Defendant’s duty in this regard.

60. Defendant failed to properly implement basic data security practices.

61. Defendant’s failure to employ reasonable and appropriate measures to protect against unauthorized access to Patients’ Private Information or to comply with applicable industry standards constitutes an unfair act or practice prohibited by Section 5 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45.

Defendant Failed to Comply with HIPAA Guidelines

62. Defendant is covered businesses under HIPAA (45 C.F.R. § 160.102) and is required to comply with the HIPAA Privacy Rule and Security Rule, 45 C.F.R. Part 160 and Part 164, Subparts A and E (“Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information”), and Security Rule (“Security Standards for the Protection of Electronic Protected Health Information”), 45 C.F.R. Part 160 and Part 164, Subparts A and C.

63. Defendant is subject to the rules and regulations for safeguarding electronic forms of medical information pursuant to the Health Information Technology Act (“HITECH”).¹⁷ See 42 U.S.C. §17921, 45 C.F.R. § 160.103.

64. HIPAA’s Privacy Rule or *Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information* establishes national standards for the protection of health information.

65. HIPAA’s Privacy Rule or *Security Standards for the Protection of Electronic Protected Health Information* establishes a national set of security standards for protecting health information that is kept or transferred in electronic form.

66. HIPAA requires “compl[iance] with the applicable standards, implementation specifications, and requirements” of HIPAA “with respect to electronic protected health information.” 45 C.F.R. § 164.302.

67. “Electronic protected health information” is “individually identifiable health information . . . that is (i) transmitted by electronic media; maintained in electronic media.” 45 C.F.R. § 160.103.

68. HIPAA’s Security Rule requires Defendant to do the following:

- a. Ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of all electronic protected health information the covered entity or business associate creates, receives, maintains, or transmits;
- b. Protect against any reasonably anticipated threats or hazards to the security or integrity of such information;
- c. Protect against any reasonably anticipated uses or disclosures of such information that are not permitted; and
- d. Ensure compliance by its workforce.

¹⁷ HIPAA and HITECH work in tandem to provide guidelines and rules for maintaining protected health information. HITECH references and incorporates HIPAA.

69. HIPAA also requires Defendant to “review and modify the security measures implemented . . . as needed to continue provision of reasonable and appropriate protection of electronic protected health information.” 45 C.F.R. § 164.306(e). Additionally, Defendant is required under HIPAA to “[i]mplement technical policies and procedures for electronic information systems that maintain electronic protected health information to allow access only to those persons or software programs that have been granted access rights.” 45 C.F.R. § 164.312(a)(1).

70. HIPAA and HITECH also obligates Defendant to implement policies and procedures to prevent, detect, contain, and correct security violations, and to protect against uses or disclosures of electronic PHI that are reasonably anticipated but not permitted by the privacy rules. *See* 45 C.F.R. § 164.306(a)(1) and § 164.306(a)(3); *see also* 42 U.S.C. § 17902.

71. HIPAA requires a covered entity to have and apply appropriate sanctions against members of its workforce who fail to comply with the privacy policies and procedures of the covered entity or the requirements of 45 C.F.R. Part 164, Subparts D or E. *See* 45 C.F.R. § 164.530(e).

72. HIPAA requires a covered entity to mitigate, to the extent practicable, any harmful effect that is known to the covered entity of a use or disclosure of PHI in violation of its policies and procedures or the requirements of 45 C.F.R. Part 164, Subpart E by the covered entity or its business associate. *See* 45 C.F.R. § 164.530(f).

73. HIPAA also requires the Office of Civil Rights (“OCR”), within the Department of Health and Human Services (“HHS”), to issue annual guidance documents on the provisions in the HIPAA Security Rule. *See* 45 C.F.R. §§ 164.302-164.318. For example, “HHS has developed guidance and tools to assist HIPAA covered entities in identifying and implementing the most cost

effective and appropriate administrative, physical, and technical safeguards to protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of e-PHI and comply with the risk analysis requirements of the Security Rule.” US Department of Health & Human Services, Security Rule Guidance Material.¹⁸ The list of resources includes a link to guidelines set by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), which OCR says “represent the industry standard for good business practices with respect to standards for securing e-PHI.” US Department of Health & Human Services, Guidance on Risk Analysis.¹⁹

Defendant Owed Plaintiff and Class Members a Duty to Safeguard their Private Information

74. In addition to its obligations under federal and state laws, Defendant owed a duty to Plaintiff and Class members to exercise reasonable care in obtaining, retaining, securing, safeguarding, deleting, and protecting the Private Information in its possession from being compromised, lost, stolen, accessed, and misused by unauthorized persons. Defendant owed a duty to Plaintiff and Class members to provide reasonable security, including consistency with industry standards and requirements, and to ensure that its computer systems, networks, and protocols adequately protected the Private Information of Class members.

75. Defendant owed a duty to Plaintiff and Class members to create and implement reasonable data security practices and procedures to protect the Private Information in its possession, including adequately training its employees and others who accessed Private Information within its computer systems on how to adequately protect Private Information.

¹⁸ <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/security/guidance/index.html> (last accessed Feb. 13, 2024)

¹⁹<https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/security/guidance/guidance-risk-analysis/index.html> (last accessed Feb 13, 2024).

76. Defendant owed a duty to Plaintiff and Class members to implement processes that would detect a compromise of Private Information in a timely manner.

77. Defendant owed a duty to Plaintiff and Class members to act upon data security warnings and alerts in a timely fashion.

78. Defendant owed a duty to Plaintiff and Class members to disclose in a timely and accurate manner when and how the Data Breach occurred.

79. Defendant owed a duty of care to Plaintiff and Class members because they were foreseeable and probable victims of any inadequate data security practices.

The Data Breach Increases Plaintiff's and Class members' Risk of Identity Theft

80. The unencrypted Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members will end up (if it has not already ended up) for sale on the dark web, as that is the *modus operandi* of hackers.

81. Unencrypted Private Information may also fall into the hands of companies that will use the detailed Private Information for targeted marketing without the approval of Plaintiff and Class members.

82. Simply put, unauthorized individuals can easily access the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members because of the Data Breach.

83. The link between a data breach and the risk of identity theft is simple and well established. Criminals acquire and steal Private Information to monetize the information. Criminals monetize the data by selling the stolen information on the black market to other criminals who then utilize the information to commit a variety of identity theft related crimes discussed below.

84. Plaintiff's and Class members' Private Information is of great value to hackers and cyber criminals, and the data stolen in the Data Breach has been used and will continue to be used

in a variety of sordid ways for criminals to exploit Plaintiff and Class members and to profit from their misfortune.

Loss of Time to Mitigate the Risk of Identity Theft and Fraud

85. As a result of the recognized risk of identity theft, when a data breach occurs and an individual is notified by a company that their Private Information was compromised, as in this Data Breach, the reasonable person is expected to take steps and spend time to address the dangerous situation, learn about the breach, and otherwise mitigate the risk of becoming a victim of identity theft or fraud. Failure to spend time taking steps to review accounts or credit reports could expose the individual to greater financial harm.

86. Thus, due to the actual and imminent risk of identity theft, Plaintiff and Class members must monitor their financial accounts for many years to mitigate the risk of identity theft.

87. Plaintiff and Class members have spent, and will spend additional time in the future, on a variety of prudent actions, such as changing passwords and resecuring their own computer systems.

88. Plaintiff's mitigation efforts are consistent with the U.S. Government Accountability Office that released a report in 2007 regarding data breaches ("GAO Report") in which it noted that victims of identity theft will face "substantial costs and time to repair the damage to their good name and credit record."²⁰

89. Plaintiff's mitigation efforts are also consistent with the steps the FTC recommends data breach victims take to protect their personal and financial information after a data breach,

²⁰ See United States Government Accountability Office, GAO-07-737, Personal Information: Data Breaches Are Frequent, but Evidence of Resulting Identity Theft Is Limited; However, the Full Extent Is Unknown (June 2007), <https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07737.pdf> (last accessed Feb. 13, 2024).

including: contacting one of the credit bureaus to place a fraud alert (and considering an extended fraud alert that lasts for seven years if someone steals their identity), reviewing their credit reports, contacting companies to remove fraudulent charges from their accounts, placing a credit freeze on their credit, and correcting their credit reports.²¹

90. And for those Class members who experience actual identity theft and fraud, the United States Government Accountability Office released a report in 2007 regarding data breaches (“GAO Report”) in which it noted that victims of identity theft will face “substantial costs and time to repair the damage to their good name and credit record.”

Diminution of Value of Private Information

91. Private Information is valuable property.²² Its value is axiomatic, considering the value of Big Data in corporate America and that the consequences of cyber thefts include heavy prison sentences. Even this obvious risk-to-reward analysis illustrates, beyond doubt, that Private Information has considerable market value.

92. The Private Information stolen in the Data Breach is significantly more valuable than the loss of, say, credit card information in a large retailer data breach. Victims affected by those retailer breaches could avoid much of the potential future harm by simply cancelling credit or debit cards and obtaining replacements. The information stolen in the Data Breach is difficult, if not impossible, to change.

93. This kind of data, as one would expect, demands a much higher price on the dark web. Martin Walter, senior director at cybersecurity firm RedSeal, explained, “Compared to credit

²¹ See Federal Trade Commission, *Identity Theft.gov*, <https://www.identitytheft.gov/Steps> (last accessed Feb 13, 2024).

²² See “Data Breaches Are Frequent, but Evidence of Resulting Identity Theft Is Limited; However, the Full Extent Is Unknown,” at 2, U.S. Government Accountability Office, June 2007, <https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07737.pdf> (last accessed Feb. 13, 2024) (“GAO Report”).

card information, personally identifiable information . . . [is] worth more than 10x on the black market.”²³

94. Sensitive Private Information can sell for as much as \$363 per record according to the Infosec Institute.²⁴

95. An active and robust legitimate marketplace for Private Information also exists. In 2019, the data brokering industry was worth roughly \$200 billion.²⁵ In fact, the data marketplace is so sophisticated that consumers can actually sell their non-public information directly to a data broker who in turn aggregates the information and provides it to marketers or app developers.^{26,27} Consumers who agree to provide their web browsing history to the Nielsen Corporation can receive up to \$50 a year.²⁸

96. As a result of the Data Breach, Plaintiff’s and Class members’ Private Information, which has an inherent market value in both legitimate and dark markets, has been damaged and diminished by its compromise and unauthorized release. However, this transfer of value occurred without any consideration paid to Plaintiff or Class members for their property, resulting in an

²³ Tim Greene, *Anthem Hack: Personal Data Stolen Sells for 10x Price of Stolen Credit Card Numbers*, IT WORLD (Feb. 6, 2015), <http://www.itworld.com/article/2880960/anthem-hackpersonal-data-stolen-sells-for-10x-price-of-stolen-credit-card-numbers.html> (last accessed Feb. 13, 2024).

²⁴ See, e.g., John T. Soma, et al, Corporate Privacy Trend: The “Value” of Personally Identifiable Information (“Private Information”) Equals the “Value” of Financial Assets, 15 Rich. J.L. & Tech. 11, at *3-4 (2009) (“Private Information, which companies obtain at little cost, has quantifiable value that is rapidly reaching a level comparable to the value of traditional financial assets.”) (citations omitted).

²⁵ See Ashiq Ja, *Hackers Selling Healthcare Data in the Black Market*, InfoSec (July 27, 2015), <https://resources.infosecinstitute.com/topic/hackers-selling-healthcare-data-in-the-black-market/> (last accessed Feb. 13, 2024).

²⁶ <https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2019-11-05/column-data-brokers> (last accessed Nov. 10, 2023).

²⁷ <https://datacoup.com/> (last accessed Feb. 13, 2024).

²⁸ <https://www.thepennyhoarder.com/make-money/nielsenpanel/#:~:text=Sign%20up%20to%20join%20the,software%20installed%20on%20your%20computer> (last accessed Feb. 13, 2024).

economic loss. Moreover, the Private Information is now readily available, and the rarity of the data has been lost, thereby causing additional loss of value.

97. The fraudulent activity resulting from the Data Breach may not come to light for years.

98. Plaintiff and Class members now face years of constant surveillance of their financial and personal records, monitoring, and loss of rights. Plaintiff and Class members are incurring and will continue to incur such damages in addition to any fraudulent use of their Private Information.

99. Defendant was, or should have been, fully aware of the unique type and the significant volume of data on Defendant's network, amounting to millions of individuals' detailed Private Information and, thus, the significant number of individuals who would be harmed by the exposure of the unencrypted data.

100. The injuries to Plaintiff and Class members were directly and proximately caused by Defendant's failure to implement or maintain adequate data security measures for the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members.

The Future Cost of Credit and Identity Theft Monitoring Is Reasonable and Necessary

101. Given the type of targeted attack in this case, the sophisticated criminal activity, the volume of data compromised in this Data Breach, and the sensitive type of Private Information involved in this Data Breach, there is a strong probability that entire batches of stolen information have been placed, or will be placed, on the black market/dark web for sale and purchase by criminals intending to utilize the Private Information for identity theft crimes—*e.g.*, opening bank accounts in the victims' names to make purchases or to launder money; file false tax returns; take out loans or lines of credit; or file false unemployment claims.

102. Such fraud may go undetected until debt collection calls commence months, or even years, later. An individual may not know that his or his Private Information was used to file for unemployment benefits until law enforcement notifies the individual's employer of the suspected fraud. Fraudulent tax returns are typically discovered only when an individual's authentic tax return is rejected.

103. Consequently, Plaintiff and Class members are at an increased risk of fraud and identity theft for many years into the future.

104. The retail cost of credit monitoring and identity theft monitoring can cost around \$200 a year per Class member. This is a reasonable and necessary cost to monitor and protect Class members from the risk of identity theft resulting from Defendant's Data Breach. This is a future cost for a minimum of five years that Plaintiff and Class members would not need to bear, but for Defendant's failure to safeguard their Private Information.

Loss of the Benefit of the Bargain

105. Furthermore, Defendant's poor data security deprived Plaintiff and Class members of the benefit of their bargain. When agreeing to pay Defendant for the provision of its services, Plaintiff and other reasonable consumers understood and expected that they were, in part, paying for the service and necessary data security to protect the Private Information when, in fact, Defendant did not provide the expected data security. Accordingly, Plaintiff and Class members received services that were of a lesser value than what they reasonably expected to receive under the bargains they struck with Defendant.

Plaintiff's Experience

106. Plaintiff obtained services at Fast Pace Kentucky LLC, which, upon information and belief, contracted with Defendant for services, as a patient in the past.

107. As a condition of obtaining services at Fast Pace Kentucky LLC, he was required to provide his Private Information to Defendant.

108. Upon information and belief, at the time of the Data Breach, Defendant retained Plaintiff's Private Information in its system.

109. Plaintiff is very careful about sharing his sensitive Private Information. Plaintiff stores any documents containing his Private Information in a safe and secure location. Plaintiff has never knowingly transmitted unencrypted sensitive Private Information over the Internet or any other unsecured source.

110. Plaintiff learned of the data breach after receiving the Notice. According to the Cybersecurity, Plaintiff's Private Information was improperly accessed and obtained by unauthorized third parties. The Private Information comprised his name, date of birth, and medical history/treatment information.

111. As a result of the Data Breach, Plaintiff made reasonable efforts to mitigate the impact of the Data Breach, including checking his bills and accounts to make sure they were correct. Plaintiff has spent significant time dealing with the Data Breach, valuable time he otherwise would have spent on other activities, including but not limited to work and/or recreation. This time has been lost forever and cannot be recaptured.

112. As a result of the Data Breach, Plaintiff fears for his personal financial security and uncertainty over what medical information was revealed in the Data Breach. he is experiencing feelings of anxiety, sleep disruption, stress, and fear because of the Data Breach. This goes far

beyond allegations of mere worry or inconvenience; it is exactly the sort of injury and harm to a Data Breach victim that is contemplated and addressed by law.

113. As a result of the Data Breach, Plaintiff anticipates spending considerable time and money on an ongoing basis to try to mitigate and address harms caused by the Data Breach.

114. As a result of the Data Breach, Plaintiff is presently at risk and will continue to be at increased risk of identity theft and fraud for years to come.

115. Plaintiff has a continuing interest in ensuring that his Private Information, which, upon information and belief, remains in Defendant's possession, is protected and safeguarded from future breaches.

V. CLASS ACTION ALLEGATIONS

116. Plaintiff brings this action pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23(a), 23(b)(1), 23(b)(2), and 23(b)(3), on behalf of a class defined as:

All individuals whose PII and/or PHI was accessed and/or acquired by an unauthorized party in the Data Breach, including all who were sent a notice of the Data Breach.

117. Excluded from the Class are the following individuals and/or entities: Defendant and Defendant's parents, subsidiaries, affiliates, officers and directors, and any entity in which Defendant has a controlling interest; all individuals who make a timely election to be excluded from this proceeding using the correct protocol for opting out; and all judges assigned to hear any aspect of this litigation, as well as their immediate family members.

118. Plaintiff reserves the right to amend the definition of the Class or add a Class or Subclass if further information and discovery indicate that the definition of the Class should be narrowed, expanded, or otherwise modified.

119. **Numerosity.** The patients of the Class are so numerous that joinder of all patients is impracticable, if not completely impossible. Although the precise number of individuals impacted

is currently unknown to Plaintiff and exclusively in the possession of Defendant, upon information and belief, thousands of individuals were impacted. The Class is apparently identifiable within Defendant's records, and Defendant has already identified these individuals (as evidenced by sending them breach notification letters).

120. **Commonality.** There are questions of law and fact common to the Class, which predominate over any questions affecting only individual Class Members. These common questions of law and fact include, without limitation:

- a. Whether and to what extent Defendant had a duty to protect the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members;
- b. Whether Defendant had respective duties not to disclose the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members to unauthorized third parties;
- c. Whether Defendant had respective duties not to use the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members for non-business purposes;
- d. Whether Defendant failed to adequately safeguard the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members;
- e. Whether Defendant failed to implement and maintain reasonable security procedures and practices appropriate to the nature and scope of the information compromised in the Data Breach;
- f. Whether Defendant adequately addressed and fixed the vulnerabilities which permitted the Data Breach to occur;
- g. Whether Plaintiff and Class members are entitled to actual damages, statutory damages, and/or nominal damages as a result of Defendant's wrongful conduct; and

- h. Whether Plaintiff and Class members are entitled to injunctive relief to redress the imminent and currently ongoing harm faced as a result of the Data Breach.

121. **Typicality.** Plaintiff's claims are typical of those of other Class Members because Plaintiff's PII, like that of every other Class Member, was compromised in the Data Breach.

122. This class action is also appropriate for certification because Defendant acted or refused to act on grounds generally applicable to the Class, thereby requiring the Court's imposition of uniform relief to ensure compatible standards of conduct toward the Class members and making final injunctive relief appropriate with respect to the Class as a whole. Defendant's policies challenged herein apply to and affect Class members uniformly and Plaintiff's challenge of these policies hinges on Defendant's conduct with respect to the Class as a whole, not on facts or law applicable only to Plaintiff.

123. **Adequacy of Representation.** Plaintiff will fairly and adequately represent and protect the interests of the Class Members. Plaintiff's Counsel is competent and experienced in litigating Class actions, including data privacy litigation of this kind.

124. **Predominance.** Defendant has engaged in a common course of conduct toward Plaintiff and Class Members, in that all the Plaintiff's and Class Members' data was stored on the same computer systems and unlawfully accessed in the same way. The common issues arising from Defendant's conduct affecting Class Members set out above predominate over any individualized issues. Adjudication of these common issues in a single action has important and desirable advantages of judicial economy.

125. **Superiority.** A class action is superior to other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of the controversy. Class treatment of common questions of law and fact is superior to multiple individual actions or piecemeal litigation. Absent a class action, most Class

Members would likely find that the cost of litigating their individual claims is prohibitively high and would therefore have no effective remedy. The prosecution of separate actions by individual Class Members would create a risk of inconsistent or varying adjudications with respect to individual Class Members, which would establish incompatible standards of conduct for Defendant. In contrast, the conduct of this action as a class action presents far fewer management difficulties, conserves judicial resources and the parties' resources, and protects the rights of each Class Member.

126. Defendant has acted on grounds that apply generally to the Class as a whole, so that class certification, injunctive relief, and corresponding declaratory relief are appropriate on a class-wide basis.

127. Further, Defendant has acted on grounds that apply generally to the Class as a whole, so that class certification, injunctive relief, and corresponding declaratory relief are appropriate on a class-wide basis.

- a. Whether Defendant owed a legal duty to Plaintiff and the Class to exercise due care in collecting, storing, and safeguarding their Private Information;
- b. Whether Defendant's security measures to protect their data systems were reasonable in light of best practices recommended by data security experts;
- c. Whether Defendant's failure to institute adequate protective security measures amounted to negligence;
- d. Whether Defendant's failure to institute adequate protective security measures amounted to breach of an implied contract;
- e. Whether Defendant failed to take commercially reasonable steps to safeguard consumer Private Information; and

f. Whether adherence to HIPAA and FTC data security recommendations, and measures recommended by data security experts would have reasonably prevented the Data Breach.

128. Finally, all members of the proposed Class are readily ascertainable. Defendant has access to Class Members' names and addresses affected by the Data Breach. Class Members have already been preliminarily identified and sent notice of the Data Breach by Defendant.

VI. CAUSES OF ACTION

COUNT I NEGLIGENCE (On behalf of Plaintiff and all Class Members)

129. Plaintiff hereby repeats and realleges paragraphs 1 through 128 of this Complaint and incorporates them by reference herein.

130. Defendant requires its clients' patients, including Plaintiff and Class members, to submit non-public Private Information in the ordinary course of providing its services.

131. Defendant gathered and stored the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members as part of its business of soliciting its services to its clients, which solicitations and services affect commerce.

132. Plaintiff and Class members entrusted Defendant with their Private Information with the understanding that Defendant would safeguard their information.

133. Defendant had full knowledge of the sensitivity of the Private Information and the types of harm that Plaintiff and Class members could and would suffer if the Private Information were wrongfully disclosed.

134. By assuming the responsibility to collect and store this data, and in fact doing so, and sharing it and using it for commercial gain, Defendant had a duty of care to use reasonable

means to secure and safeguard their computer property—and Class members’ Private Information held within it—to prevent disclosure of the information, and to safeguard the information from theft. Defendant’s duty included a responsibility to implement processes by which it could detect a breach of its security systems in a reasonably expeditious period of time and to give prompt notice to those affected in the case of a data breach.

135. Defendant had a duty to employ reasonable security measures under Section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45, which prohibits “unfair . . . practices in or affecting commerce,” including, as interpreted and enforced by the FTC, the unfair practice of failing to use reasonable measures to protect confidential data.

136. Defendant’s duty to use reasonable security measures under HIPAA required Defendant to “reasonably protect” confidential data from “any intentional or unintentional use or disclosure” and to “have in place appropriate administrative, technical, and physical safeguards to protect the privacy of protected health information.” 45 C.F.R. § 164.530(c)(1). Some or all of the healthcare and/or medical information at issue in this case constitutes “protected health information” within the meaning of HIPAA.

137. For instance, HIPAA required Defendant to notify victims of the Breach within 60 days of the discovery of the Data Breach. Defendant did not begin to notify Plaintiff or Class Members of the Data Breach until May 23, 2024 despite, upon information and belief, Defendant knowing in or about June 2023 that unauthorized persons had accessed and acquired the private, protected, personal information of Plaintiff and the Class.

138. Defendant owed a duty of care to Plaintiff and Class members to provide data security consistent with industry standards and other requirements discussed herein, and to ensure

that its systems and networks, and the personnel responsible for them, adequately protected the Private Information.

139. Defendant's duty of care to use reasonable security measures arose as a result of the special relationship that existed between Defendant and Patients. That special relationship arose because Plaintiff and Class members entrusted Defendant with their confidential Private Information, a necessary part of being Patients of Defendant.

140. Defendant's duty of care to use reasonable security measures arose as a result of the special relationship that existed between SysInformation and Plaintiff and Class Members. That special relationship arose because Plaintiff and the Class entrusted SysInformation with their confidential Private Information, a necessary part of being patients at Defendant's clients.

141. Defendant's duty to use reasonable care in protecting confidential data arose not only as a result of the statutes and regulations described above, but also because Defendant is bound by industry standards to protect confidential Private Information.

142. Defendant was subject to an "independent duty," untethered to any contract between Defendant and Plaintiff or the Class.

143. Defendant breached its duties, thus were negligent, by failing to use reasonable measures to protect Class members' Private Information. The specific negligent acts and omissions committed by Defendant include, but are not limited to, (a) failing to adopt, implement, and maintain adequate security measures to safeguard Class members' Private Information; (b) failing to adequately monitor the security of their networks and systems; and (c) allowing unauthorized access to Class members' Private Information.

144. A breach of security, unauthorized access, and resulting injury to Plaintiff and the Class was reasonably foreseeable, particularly considering Defendant's inadequate security practices.

145. It was foreseeable that Defendant's failure to use reasonable measures to protect Class members' Private Information would result in injury to Class members. Further, the breach of security was reasonably foreseeable given the known high frequency of cyberattacks and data breaches in the healthcare industry.

146. Defendant had full knowledge of the sensitivity of the Private Information and the types of harm that Plaintiff and Class members could and would suffer if the Private Information were wrongfully disclosed.

147. Plaintiff and Class members were the foreseeable and probable victims of any inadequate security practices and procedures. Defendant knew or should have known of the inherent risks in collecting and storing the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members, the critical importance of providing adequate security of that Private Information, and the necessity for encrypting Private Information stored on Defendant's systems.

148. It was therefore foreseeable that the failure to adequately safeguard Class members' Private Information would result in one or more types of injuries to Class members.

149. Plaintiff and Class members had no ability to protect their Private Information that was in, and likely remains in, Defendant's possession.

150. Defendant was in a position to protect against the harm suffered by Plaintiff and the Class as a result of the Data Breach.

151. Defendant's duty extended to protecting Plaintiff and Class members from the risk of foreseeable criminal conduct of third parties, which has been recognized in situations where the

actor's own conduct or misconduct exposes another to the risk or defeats protections put in place to guard against the risk, or where the parties are in a special relationship. *See* Restatement (Second) of Torts § 302B. Numerous courts and legislatures have also recognized the existence of a specific duty to reasonably safeguard personal information.

152. Defendant has admitted that the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members was wrongfully lost and disclosed to unauthorized third persons as a result of the Data Breach.

153. But for Defendant's wrongful and negligent breach of duties owed to Plaintiff and Class members, the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members would not have been compromised.

154. There is a close causal connection between Defendant's failure to implement security measures to protect the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members and the harm, or risk of imminent harm, suffered by Plaintiff and Class members. The Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members was lost and accessed as the proximate result of Defendant's failure to exercise reasonable care in safeguarding such Private Information by adopting, implementing, and maintaining appropriate security measures.

155. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's negligence, Plaintiff and Class members have suffered and will suffer injury, including but not limited to: (i) invasion of privacy; (ii) lost or diminished value of their Private Information; (iii) lost opportunity costs associated with attempting to mitigate the actual consequences of the Data Breach, including but not limited to lost time; (iv) loss of benefit of the bargain; and (v) the continued and certainly increased risk to their Private Information, which: (a) remains unencrypted and available for unauthorized third parties to access and abuse; and (b) remains in Defendant's possession and is subject to further

unauthorized disclosures so long as Defendant fails to undertake appropriate and adequate measures to protect the Private Information.

156. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's negligence, Plaintiff and Class members have suffered and will continue to suffer other forms of injury and/or harm, including, but not limited to, anxiety, emotional distress, loss of privacy, and other economic and non-economic losses.

157. Additionally, as a direct and proximate result of Defendant's negligence, Plaintiff and Class members have suffered and will suffer the continued risks of exposure of their Private Information, which remains in Defendant's possession and is subject to further unauthorized disclosures so long as Defendant fails to undertake appropriate and adequate measures to protect the Private Information in its continued possession.

158. Plaintiff and Class members are entitled to compensatory and consequential damages suffered as a result of the Data Breach.

159. Plaintiff and Class members are also entitled to injunctive relief requiring Defendant to (i) strengthen their data security systems and monitoring procedures; (ii) submit to future annual audits of those systems and monitoring procedures; and (iii) continue to provide adequate credit monitoring to all Class members.

COUNT II
NEGLIGENCE *PER SE*
(On behalf of Plaintiff and all Class Members)

160. Plaintiff hereby repeats and realleges paragraphs 1 through 128 of this Complaint and incorporates them by reference herein.

161. Pursuant to the Federal Trade Commission Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45, Defendant had a duty to provide fair and adequate computer systems and data security practices to safeguard Plaintiff's and Class members' Private Information.

162. Pursuant to HIPAA, 42 U.S.C. § 1302d *et seq.*, Defendant had a duty to implement reasonable safeguards to protect Plaintiff's and Class members' Private Information.

163. Pursuant to HIPAA, Defendant had a duty to render the electronic PHI they maintained unusable, unreadable, or indecipherable to unauthorized individuals, as specified in the HIPAA Security Rule by "the use of an algorithmic process to transform data into a form in which there is a low probability of assigning meaning without use of a confidential process or key." *See* definition of encryption at 45 C.F.R. § 164.304.

164. Defendant breached its duties to Plaintiff and Class members under the FTC Act and HIPAA by failing to provide fair, reasonable, or adequate computer systems and data security practices to safeguard Plaintiff's and Class members' Private Information.

165. Defendant's failure to comply with applicable laws and regulations constitutes negligence *per se*.

166. The injuries to Plaintiff and Class members resulting from the Data Breach were directly and indirectly caused by Defendant's violation of the statutes described herein.

167. Plaintiff and Class members were within the class of persons the Federal Trade Commission Act and HIPAA were intended to protect and the type of harm that resulted from the Data Breach was the type of harm these statutes were intended to guard against.

168. But for Defendant's wrongful and negligent breach of its duties owed to Plaintiff and Class members, Plaintiff and Class members would not have been injured.

169. The injuries and harms suffered by Plaintiff and Class members were the reasonably foreseeable result of Defendant's breach of its duties. Defendant knew or should have known that it was failing to meet its duties and that Defendant's breach would cause Plaintiff and Class members to experience the foreseeable harms associated with the exposure of their Private Information.

170. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's negligent conduct, Plaintiff and Class members have suffered injuries and are entitled to compensatory, consequential, and punitive damages in an amount to be proven at trial.

COUNT III
BREACH OF FIDUCIARY DUTY
(On behalf of Plaintiff and all Class Members)

171. Plaintiff hereby repeats and realleges paragraphs 1 through 128 of this Complaint and incorporates them by reference herein.

172. Plaintiff and the other Class members gave Defendant their PII and PHI believing that Defendant would protect that information. Plaintiff and the other Class members would not have provided Defendant with this information had they known it would not be adequately protected. Defendant's acceptance and storage of Plaintiff's and the other Class members' PII and PHI created a fiduciary relationship between Defendant on the one hand, and Plaintiff and the other Class members, on the other hand, and Plaintiff and the other Class members, on the other hand. In light of this relationship, Defendant must act primarily for the benefit of their patients, which includes safeguarding and protecting Plaintiff's and the other Class members' PII and PHI.

173. Due to the nature of the relationship between Defendant and Plaintiff and the other Class members, Plaintiffs and the other Class members were entirely reliant upon Defendant to ensure that their PII and PHI was adequately protected. Plaintiff and the other Class members had

no way of verifying or influencing the nature and extent of Defendant or their vendors' data security policies and practices, and Defendant were in an exclusive position to guard against the Data Breach.

174. Defendant have a fiduciary duty to act for the benefit of Plaintiff and the other Class members upon matters within the scope of their relationship. They breached that duty by contracting with companies that failed to properly protect the integrity of the systems containing Plaintiff's and the other Class members' PII and PHI, failing to comply with the data security guidelines set forth by HIPPA, and otherwise failing to safeguard Plaintiff's and the other Class members' PII and PHI that they collected.

175. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's breaches of its fiduciary duties, Plaintiff and the other Class members have suffered and will suffer injury, including, but not limited to: (i) a substantial increase in the likelihood of identity theft; (ii) the compromise, publication, and theft of their PII and PHI; (iii) out-of-pocket expenses associated with the prevention, detection, and recovery from unauthorized use of their PII and PHI; (iv) lost opportunity costs associated with effort attempting to mitigate the actual and future consequences of the Data Breach; (v) the continued risk to their PII and PHI which remains in Defendant's possession; (vi) future costs in terms of time, effort, and money that will be required to prevent, detect, and repair the impact of the PII and PHI compromised as a result of the Data breach; (vii) loss of potential value of their PII and PHI; (viii) overpayment for the services that were received without adequate data security.

COUNT IV
BREACH OF IMPLIED CONTRACT
(On behalf of Plaintiff and all Class Members)

176. Plaintiff hereby repeats and realleges paragraphs 1 through 128 of this Complaint and incorporates them by reference herein.

177. Defendant offered to provide services to its Patients, including Plaintiff and Class members, in exchange for payment.

178. Defendant also required Plaintiff and the Class members to provide their Private Information to receive services.

179. In turn, Defendant impliedly promised to protect Plaintiff's and Class members' Private Information through adequate data security measures.

180. Plaintiff and the Class members accepted Defendant's offer by providing Private Information to Defendant in exchange for receiving Defendant services, and then by paying for and receiving the same.

181. Plaintiff and Class members would not have entrusted their Private Information to Defendant but for the above-described agreement with Defendant.

182. Defendant materially breached its agreement(s) with Plaintiff and Class members by failing to safeguard such Private Information, violating industry standards necessarily incorporated in the agreement.

183. Plaintiff and Class members have performed under the relevant agreements, or such performance was waived by the conduct of Defendant.

184. The covenant of good faith and fair dealing is an element of every contract. All such contracts impose on each party a duty of good faith and fair dealing. The parties must act with honesty in fact in the conduct or transactions concerned. Good faith and fair dealing, in

connection with executing contracts and discharging performance and other duties according to their terms, means preserving the spirit—not merely the letter—of the bargain. Put differently, the parties to a contract are mutually obligated to comply with the substance of their contract along with its form.

185. Defendant’s conduct as alleged herein also violated the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing inherent in every contract.

186. The losses and damages Plaintiff and Class members sustained as described herein were the direct and proximate result of Defendant’s breach of the implied contracts with them, including breach of the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing.

VII. PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, on behalf of himself and Class members, requests judgment against Defendant and that the Court grants the following:

- A. For an order certifying the Class, as defined herein, and appointing Plaintiff and his Counsel to represent the Class;
- B. For equitable relief enjoining Defendant from engaging in the wrongful conduct complained of herein pertaining to the misuse and/or disclosure of the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members, and from refusing to issue prompt, complete, any accurate disclosures to Plaintiff and Class members;
- C. For injunctive relief requested by Plaintiff, including but not limited to, injunctive and other equitable relief as is necessary to protect the interests of Plaintiff and Class members, including but not limited to an order:
 - i. prohibiting Defendant from engaging in the wrongful and unlawful acts described herein;

- ii. requiring Defendant to protect, including through encryption, all data collected through the course of its business in accordance with all applicable regulations, industry standards, and federal, state, or local laws.
- iii. requiring Defendant to delete, destroy, and purge the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members unless Defendant can provide to the Court reasonable justification for the retention and use of such information when weighed against the privacy interests of Plaintiff and Class members;
- iv. requiring Defendant to implement and maintain a comprehensive information security program designed to protect the confidentiality and integrity of the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members;
- v. prohibiting Defendant from maintaining the Private Information of Plaintiff and Class members on a cloud-based database;
- vi. requiring Defendant to engage independent third-party security auditors/penetration testers as well as internal security personnel to conduct testing, including simulated attacks, penetration tests, and audits on Defendant's systems on a periodic basis, and ordering Defendant to promptly correct any problems or issues detected by such third-party security auditors;
- vii. requiring Defendant to engage independent third-party security auditors and internal personnel to run automated security monitoring;
- viii. requiring Defendant to audit, test, and train its security personnel regarding any new or modified procedures;

- ix. requiring Defendant to segment data by, among other things, creating firewalls and access controls so that if one area of Defendant's network is compromised, hackers cannot gain access to other portions of Defendant's systems;
- x. requiring Defendant to conduct regular database scanning and security checks;
- xiv. requiring Defendant to implement, maintain, regularly review, and revise as necessary a threat management program designed to appropriately monitor Defendant's information networks for threats, both internal and external, and assess whether monitoring tools are appropriately configured, tested, and updated;
- xv. requiring Defendant to meaningfully educate all Class members about the threats that they face as a result of the loss of their confidential Private Information to third parties, as well as the steps affected individuals must take to protect themselves; and
- xvi. requiring Defendant to implement logging and monitoring programs sufficient to track traffic to and from Defendant's servers; and for a period of 10 years, appointing a qualified and independent third-party assessor to conduct an attestation on an annual basis to evaluate Defendant's compliance with the terms of the Court's final judgment, to provide such report to the Court and to counsel for the class, and to report any deficiencies with compliance of the Court's final judgment.

- D. For an award of damages, including actual, statutory, nominal, and consequential damages, as allowed by law in an amount to be determined by a jury at trial;
- E. For an award of attorneys' fees, costs, and litigation expenses, as allowed by law;
- F. For prejudgment interest on all amounts awarded; and
- G. Such other and further relief as this Court may deem just and proper.

JURY TRIAL DEMAND

Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury.

DATED: June 6, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

SHAMIS & GENTILE P.A.

/s/ Andrew Shamis

Andrew J. Shamis, Esq.

Tx Bar No. 24124558

ashamis@shamisgentile.com

14 NE 1st Ave., Suite 705

Miami, Florida 33132

Tel: (305) 479-2299

Counsel for Plaintiff and the Class.

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: [Data Breach Lawsuit Filed Over June 2023 SysInformation Healthcare Services Cyberattack](#)
