#### UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

#### MIDDLE DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

)

DOUGLAS S. CHABOT, et al., Individually and on Behalf of All Others Similarly Situated,

Plaintiffs,

vs.

WALGREENS BOOTS ALLIANCE, INC., et al.,

Defendants.

Civ. Action No. 1:18-cv-02118-JPW

**CLASS ACTION** 

LEAD PLAINTIFFS' REPLY IN FURTHER SUPPORT OF MOTIONS FOR FINAL APPROVAL OF SETTLEMENT, PLAN OF ALLOCATION, ATTORNEYS' FEES AND LITIGATION EXPENSES, AND AWARDS TO LEAD PLAINTIFFS PURSUANT TO 15 U.S.C. §78u-4(a)(4) Lead Plaintiffs and Lead Counsel respectfully submit this reply in further support of their motions for final approval of the \$192.5 million settlement, approval of the proposed Plan of Allocation, award of attorneys' fees and expenses, and awards to Lead Plaintiffs pursuant to 15 U.S.C. §78u-4(a)(4) in connection with their representation of the Class.<sup>1</sup>

#### I. INTRODUCTION

This Settlement establishes a common fund of \$192.5 million, in cash, paid by Walgreens and certain of its executives for the benefit of a Class of Rite Aid investors. As detailed in Lead Plaintiffs' and Lead Counsel's opening papers, this certified class action followed eight years of intense litigation and was ultimately reached through arm's-length mediation overseen by the Honorable Layn R. Phillips (Ret.). There should be no doubt that Lead Plaintiffs attained the highest possible Class-wide recovery for these claims, relative to the extreme risks of this case and its continued litigation.

The reaction of the Class confirms that this Settlement represents an outstanding recovery. The robust Court-approved notice program involved, *inter alia*, sending over 149,400 copies of the Notice and Proof of Claim to potential Class

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated or defined, all capitalized terms used herein have the meanings provided in the Stipulation of Settlement (the "Stipulation"). ECF 307-1. All citations and footnotes are omitted and all emphasis is added, unless otherwise indicated.

Members and publishing in *The Wall Street Journal*. The January 24, 2024 deadline for objections set forth in the Notice has now passed.

In response to that extensive notice program, only two objections were filed. Neither objection is directed to the adequacy of the Settlement or the Settlement Amount. One objection challenges the \$10 minimum payment threshold in the Plan of Allocation. The Third Circuit and this Court, however, have expressly approved the same \$10 minimum threshold in settlement payment allocations. The other objector seeks individual compensation for the Rite Aid shares he purchased outside of the Class Period. Such shares are not in the Class, not part of this Action, and were dismissed from this Action long ago. Lead Counsel also received one handwritten request to postpone the upcoming final approval hearing, but the request is largely unintelligible and contains no meaningful justification or support.

No stockholder objected to the requested attorneys' fees or expenses. As described below, the Third Circuit counsels that the reaction of a class including institutional investors is a powerful indicator of the reasonableness of a requested fee in a large securities case. Here, despite a class filled with institutional investors with millions of dollars at stake, and the resources and sophistication to challenge an excessive fee, no such institutions objected. Nor did anyone else. This resoundingly positive reaction supports the requested attorneys' fees and litigation expenses. In sum, the positive reaction of the Class further demonstrates that the proposed Settlement, the Plan of Allocation, the request for fees and expenses, and the request for Lead Plaintiff awards are fair and reasonable and should be approved.

# II. THE CLASS OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORTS THE SETTLEMENT

The Third Circuit has made clear that one of the principal factors district courts consider in connection with final approval of a settlement is "the reaction of the class to the settlement." Girsh v. Jepson, 521 F.2d 153, 157 (3d Cir. 1975). The Class's reaction here is overwhelmingly supportive. As noted, over 149,400 copies of the Notice and Proof of Claim were sent to potential Class Members, the Summary Notice was published in *The Wall Street Journal* and transmitted over *Business Wire*, and the Notice also posted case-specific website, was to а www.riteaidsecuritiessettlement.com.<sup>2</sup> Only two individuals objected to the proposed Settlement and Plan of Allocation, but neither objected to the Settlement itself or the Settlement Amount.

With only two objections, the Class's support for the Settlement and Plan of Allocation is apparent. In the Third Circuit, this demonstration of support weighs heavily in favor of approval. *See In re Cendant Corp. Litig.*, 264 F.3d 201, 235 (3d

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Declaration of Ross D. Murray Regarding Notice Dissemination, Publication, and Requests for Exclusion Received to Date ("Murray Decl."), ¶¶5-14 (ECF 316), and Supplemental Declaration of Ross D. Murray Regarding Notice Dissemination, ¶¶3-4, submitted herewith.

Cir. 2001) ("[t]he vast disparity between the number of potential class members who received notice of the Settlement and the number of objectors creates a strong presumption that this factor weighs in favor of the Settlement"); *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Bolger*, 2 F.3d 1304, 1313-14 (3d Cir. 1993) (finding that 30 objectors out of numerous shareholders was "an infinitesimal number"). Each objection here is addressed in turn below.

#### A. The Jasperse Objection to the Plan of Allocation Should Be Overruled

Mr. Jasperse writes "to object to the proposed exclusion of claims that are less than \$10.00," which is part of the Plan of Allocation. ECF 319. While Mr. Jasperse did not comply with the requirements for an objection – such as providing documentation regarding the number of shares purchased during the Class Period and identifying previous objections, *see* ECF 316-2 – Lead Plaintiffs will nevertheless substantively respond.

The Third Circuit rejected the same type of objection in *Sullivan v. DB Invs.*, *Inc.*, 667 F.3d 273, 328-29 (3d Cir. 2011). In that case, "the objectors contend[ed] that the settlement's minimum claim payment requirement of \$10 provides inadequate settlement relief, as it will eliminate the rights of many class members without providing any compensation." *Id.* at 328. The Court ultimately held: "We disagree and find no abuse in the District Court's decision to approve the minimum claim payment threshold." *Id.*  In affirming, the Third Circuit explained that "'*de minimis* thresholds for payable claims are beneficial to the class as a whole since they save the settlement fund from being depleted by the administrative costs associated with claims unlikely to exceed those costs and courts have frequently approved such thresholds, often at \$10." *Id.* (quoting *In re Gilat Satellite Networks, Ltd.,* 2007 WL 1191048, at \*9 (E.D.N.Y. Apr. 19, 2007)). The Court also cited case law "noting that the minimum recovery requirement is a common procedure that addresses 'the undeniable fact that claims-processing costs money, which comes out of the settlement fund." *Id.* (quoting *In re Global Crossing Sec. & ERISA Litig.,* 225 F.R.D. 436, 463 (S.D.N.Y. 2004)).

Courts in this Circuit have applied *Sullivan* to uphold \$10 minimum claim payments in securities cases. *See, e.g., McDermid v. Inovio Pharms., Inc.*, 2023 WL 227355, at \*9 (E.D. Pa. Jan. 18, 2023) ("The net settlement fund will be distributed to each authorized claimant entitled to at least \$10."). This Court approved the same minimum in *SEPTA. Se. Pa. Transp. Auth. v. Orrstown Fin. Servs., Inc.*, 2023 WL 1454371, at \*4 (M.D. Pa. Feb. 1, 2023) ("*SEPTA*") ("The balance of the Settlement Fund is to be distributed pursuant to the proposed Plan of Allocation to Class Members submitting timely, valid claims, and whose payments would equal \$10.00 or more."). Consistent with this authority, the Jasperse Objection should be overruled.

## B. The Wysocki Objection to the Class Period Should Be Overruled

The Wysocki Objection asserts as follows:

Please note that I am writing to object to this settlement as I believe the period involved is not sufficient. All of the RAD shares purchases I made in 2016 and 2017 were impacted by the materially false and misleading statements made by the defendants . . . not just the ones between 20 October 2016 and 26 September 2017.

I realize that the judge for this case may not amend the settlement, therefore, I must object. However, if the settlement were to include all stock purchases made in 2016 and 2017, that may be an acceptable solution.

ECF 318.

This is not a valid objection for multiple reasons. First, purchases of Rite Aid stock outside of the Class Period are not in the Class that this Court certified. *See* Notice (ECF 316-2), ¶1 ("Description of the Action and the Class . . . all persons or entities who purchased or otherwise acquired Rite Aid Corporation ('Rite Aid') common stock between October 20, 2016 and June 28, 2017, inclusive (the 'Class Period')."). As a result, such shares receive no payment as part of the Settlement, and they are also not subject to any release. *Id.*, ¶54 (limiting all "Released Plaintiffs' Claims" to claims that "relate to the purchase or acquisition of Rite Aid common stock during the Class Period").

Second, while Mr. Wysocki writes that "the judge for this case may not amend the settlement," he then requests that the Court do exactly that by seeking an

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expansion of the Class Period. Mr. Wysocki sets forth no justification that could support a different certified class under Rule 23. *See Sullivan*, 667 F.3d at 312 (district court may not modify material settlement terms).

Third, the Court has already rejected a broader class period in this case. Lead Counsel initially filed a complaint "based on alleged false or misleading statements made by the defendants during the class period <u>of October 27, 2015</u>, to June 28, 2017." *Hering v. Rite Aid Corp.*, 331 F. Supp. 3d 412, 416 (M.D. Pa. 2018). The Court dismissed the alleged misrepresentations prior to October 20, 2016, writing: "<u>Starting October 20, 2016</u>, the Walgreens Defendants began to express confidence that the deal would close and questioned newspaper reports of regulatory turbulence. With these statements, Plaintiff's allegations have more merit." *Id.* at 427.

The Court next ruled that purchasers of Rite Aid stock before October 20, 2016 have no standing to assert a claim for relief. After the initial motion to dismiss, the Court granted Walgreens' motion for judgment on the pleadings, ruling: "Because Hering purchased Rite Aid stock before the now more clearly defined actionable statements, he does not have a legal right to bring an individual Rule 10b-5 claim and, therefore, would appear to have lost his personal stake in the outcome of the dispute." *Hering v. Walgreens Boots All., Inc.*, 341 F. Supp. 3d 412, 415, 417 (M.D. Pa. 2018). The Court further ruled that "any claims based on statements made prior to October 20, 2016 . . . are no longer part of this action." *Id.* at 416.<sup>3</sup> The Wysocki Objection should also be overruled.

## C. The Lenczuk Letter's Request to Postpone the Hearing Should Be Rejected

Lead Counsel recently received the handwritten letter attached hereto as Exhibit A from Steven Lenczuk of Jersey City, New Jersey. While the document is largely unintelligible and difficult to decipher, it does state that "the hearing of at [sic] February 7, 2024 has to be postponed until April or May 2024[.] We cannot appear ...." Mr. Lenczuk does not provide justification for his request to postpone the hearing, nor does he provide any evidence of membership in the Class. Mr. Lenczuk also does not articulate any intelligible objection or substantive comment regarding the Settlement and, even if he did, he does not need to appear at the upcoming hearing to have any such objection heard. *See* Notice ¶70 ("You may file a written objection without having to appear at the Settlement Hearing."). Lead Counsel strongly opposes the request to postpone the hearing given the lack of justification or explanation provided by Mr. Lenczuk, relative to the prejudice that Class Members will incur as a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Likewise, Mr. Wysocki's additional purchases on October 11, 2017 and October 13, 2017 occurred long after Walgreens and Rite Aid announced that they had terminated the Merger on June 29, 2017. This case, however, is about Walgreens' allegedly misleading statements regarding the likelihood of approval of the pending Merger before it was terminated. Purchases after June 28, 2017 are therefore not included in the Class Period.

result of the delay in claims processing resulting from a 60- to 90-day final approval hearing postponement.

#### III. THE REACTION OF THE CLASS SUPPORTS THE REQUESTED ATTORNEYS' FEES

In *Gunter*, the Third Circuit explained that district courts should consider "the presence or absence of substantial objections by members of the class to . . . [the] fees requested by counsel." *Gunter v. Ridgewood Energy Corp.*, 223 F.3d 190, 195 n.1 (3d Cir. 2000).

The Notice identified that Lead Counsel intended to seek a fee of 30% of the Settlement Amount and payment of litigation expenses not to exceed \$1.9 million. As detailed in Lead Counsel's opening brief, the requested 30% fee is below the most recent precedent in a securities case in this Court (35% awarded) and in the Western District of Pennsylvania (33.3% awarded). ECF 312 at 14-16. The requested fee is also supported by the Third Circuit's recommended ranges in common fund cases generally (19% to 45%) and in securities settlements between \$100 to \$200 million (25% to 30%). *Id*.

No Class Member has objected to Lead Counsel's request for attorneys' fees and payment of litigation expenses. The Third Circuit's ruling in *Rite Aid Corp*. is therefore on point:

The class's reaction to the fee request supports approval of the requested fees. Notice of the fee request and the terms of the settlement were mailed to 300,000 class members, and only two objected. We agree with

the District Court such a low level of objection is a "rare phenomenon." Moreover, as the court noted, a significant number of investors in the class were "sophisticated" institutional investors that had considerable financial incentive to object had they believed the requested fees were excessive.

*In re Rite Aid Corp. Sec. Litig.*, 396 F.3d 294, 305 (3d Cir. 2005). Other courts agree. *See, e.g., In re Bisys Sec. Litig.*, 2007 WL 2049726, at \*1 (S.D.N.Y. July 16, 2007) (lack of objections from institutional investors supported the approval of fee request because "the class included numerous institutional investors who presumably had the means, the motive, and the sophistication to raise objections if they thought the [requested] fee was excessive").

In short, "'[t]he lack of objections to the requested attorneys' fees supports the request, especially because the settlement class includes large, sophisticated institutional investors." *In re Schering-Plough Corp. Enhance ERISA Litig.*, 2012 WL 1964451, at \*6 (D.N.J. May 31, 2012). Accordingly, the Court should approve Lead Counsel's request for attorneys' fees of 30% of the Settlement Amount and payment of \$1,429,116.29 for litigation expenses.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Lead Counsel obtained an exceptional result for the Class, and the Class agrees. For the reasons set forth above and in their previously filed briefs and declarations, Lead Plaintiff and Lead Counsel respectfully request that the Court approve the proposed Settlement and Plan of Allocation, as well as the request for attorneys' fees and payment of expenses and the Lead Plaintiff awards. Proposed orders are submitted herewith.

DATED: January 31, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

ROBBINS GELLER RUDMAN & DOWD LLP RANDALL J. BARON A. RICK ATWOOD, JR. DAVID A. KNOTTS TEO A. DOREMUS

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Local Counsel

#### CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify under penalty of perjury that on January 31, 2024, I authorized the electronic filing of the foregoing with the Clerk of the Court using the CM/ECF system which will send notification of such filing to the email addresses on the attached Electronic Mail Notice List, and I hereby certify that I caused the mailing of the foregoing via the United States Postal Service to the non-CM/ECF participants indicated on the attached Manual Notice List.

> s/ David A. Knotts DAVID A. KNOTTS

ROBBINS GELLER RUDMAN & DOWD LLP 655 West Broadway, Suite 1900 San Diego, CA 92101-8498 Telephone: 619/231-1058 619/231-7423 (fax)

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# Mailing Information for a Case 1:18-cv-02118-JPW Chabot et al v. Walgreens Boots Alliance, Inc. et al

#### **Electronic Mail Notice List**

The following are those who are currently on the list to receive e-mail notices for this case.

• A. Rick Atwood , Jr

ricka@rgrdlaw.com,e\_file\_sd@rgrdlaw.com,tdoremus@rgrdlaw.com

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• Thomas G. Collins

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#### **Manual Notice List**

The following is the list of attorneys who are **not** on the list to receive e-mail notices for this case (who therefore require manual noticing). You may wish to use your mouse to select and copy this list into your word processing program in order to create notices or labels for these recipients.

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Mason Capital Master Fund, L.P.
,
Recovery Master, LLC
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# **EXHIBIT** A

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Case 1:18-cv-02118-JPW Document 320-1 Filed 01/31/24 Page 7 of 9 NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE BY SECURED PARTY NINSYLVANIA DEBTORS: · n. Civ. Action No 1:18-cv-02118-JPW DOUGLAS S. CHABOT, et al., Individually and on Behalf of All Others Similarly, Situated ite CLASS ACTION Plaintiffs: N . -3.54 VS. Wal Baun 5 WALGREENS BOOTS ALLIANCE, ING. et al. A Walgreen Devid A KNOTT Atto IF YOU PURCHASED OR ACQUIRED RITE AND CORPORATION (TELE AD ) COMMON STOCK BETWEEN OCTOBER 20, 2016 AND JUNE 28, 2017, TNCLUSIVE (THE "CLUSS", YOU COULD RECEIVE A PAYMENT FROM A CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT, CERTAIN PERSONS ARE EXCLUDED FROM THE DEFINITION OF THE CLASS AS SET FORTH IN THE STIPULATION OF SETTLEMENT. THEASE READ THIS NOTICE CAREFULLY, YOUR RIGHTS MAY DEPENDING IN THIS COUNT. PLEASE READ THIS NOTICE CAREFULLY, YOUR RIGHTS MAY BE AFFECTED BY A CLASS ACTION LAWSUIT PENDING IN THIS COURT. YOU ARE HEREBY NOTFFED, pursuant to Rule 23 bfme Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and by Order of the United States District Court for In: Middle District of Pennsylonnia, that in the above captions: fudgation (the "Sciun", which is a certified class action, a Scittement has been proposed for \$19, 500,000,00 in cash. A hearing will be held on February 7, 2024, at 1:30 p.m., Before the Honorable Jennifer P. Wilson, in Courtroom 8A, at the United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, Sylvia H. Rambo U.S. Courthouse, 1501 North 6th Street, Harrisburg, PA 17105, of the minore of distribution for distribution of the Settlement should be approved by the Court as fair, reasonable, and adequate; (2) the profosed Plan of Allocation for distribution of the Settlement proceeds is fair, reasonable, and adequate and therefore should be approved; and (3) the application of Lead Coursel for the payment of attorneys' fees and expenses from the Settlement Fund, including interast carned thereon, and requests by Plaintiffs for their time and expenses, should be approved. IF YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE CLASS PROFILE IF YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE CLASS DESCRIBED ABOVE, OUR RIGHTS MAY BE AFFECTED BY THE SEFTLEMENT OF THE ACTION, AND YOU MAY BE ENTITLED TO SHARE IN THE NET SETTLEMENT FUND. If you have not received a detailed Notice of Proposed Settlement of Class Action ("Notice") and a copy of the Proof of Claim and Release ("Claim Form"), you may origin copies of these documents by contacting the Clams Administrator. Rife Aid Securities Settlement.com, Claim Administrator. Jo Gilardi & Co. LLC. P.Q. Bot 301135, Los Angeles, A 90030-1135; info@RiteAidSecuritiesSettlement.com, 1-866-653-4874. You may also obtain copies of the Stipulation of Settlement, Notice, and Claim Form at www.RiteAidSecuritiesSettlement.com. If you are a Class Member, to be eligible to share in the distribution of the Net/Settlement Fund, you must submit a Claim Form by mail postmarked no later than February 12, 2024, or submit it online by that date. If you are a Class Member and do not submit a valid Claim Form, you will not be eligible to share in the distribution of the Net Settlement Fund, but you will still be bound by any judgment entered by the Court in this Action (including the releases provided for therein). If you are a Class Member, you will be bound by any judgment entered by th. Court in this Action (including the releases provided for therein) whether or not you submit a Claim Form. If you previously excluded yourself from the Class, you will have no right to recover money pursuant to the Settlement. Any objection to the Settlement, the Plan of Allocation, Lead Counsel's request for attorneys' fees and expenses, or Plaintiffs' request for time and expenses (if any) must be filed with the Court no later than January 24, 2024, and received by each of the following counsel no later than January 17, 2024: Mennsylvania Wahbaums Tort, Walgreen & Duanter Reed Honord Le Jenni & PW: Kin Co wet wo. 84 M.S. Dist Mich Cont Cont 1001. North Cont Street Hampisbue 5 P Clerk of the Court United States District Court, Middle District of Pennsylvania Sylvia H. Rambo U.S. Courthouse 1501 North 6th Street Harrisburg, PA 17102 Lead Connert Robbins Geller Rudman & Dowd LLP David A. Knotts 655 West Broadway, Suite 1900 San Diego, CA 92101 Co The Depen Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP Caroline Hickey Zalka 767 Fifth Avenue 47702 New York, NY 10153 PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT THE COURT OR THE CLERK'S OFFICE REGARDING THIS NOTICE. If you have any questions methe Suffement, you may contact Lead Counsel at the address listed above or email settlementinfo@rgrdlaw.com. DATED: October 23, 2023 BY URDER OF THE COURT UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

Or Polici Sace Pivel3 ", Pivel3 Holdings, Inc. ("Holdings"), Nexcen Storage, Inc. ("Nergen"), PV3 (an Abo), LLC (assignee pursuant to assignment for the benefit of creditors) ("Assignee")

ON FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2023, AY 12:00 PM (PACIFIC TIME) at the offices of Sidier Austin LE, 1001 Page Mill Rook, Buildios 1, Pato Alto, CA 94304, a public sale ("Public Sale") will be conducted of substantially all of the assets (including without limitation, intellectual property, such assets collectively, the "Sale Assets") of Pivel3, Holdings, Nexcea and Assignee the accordance with Section 9-610 of the New York UCC and other applicable law. Access by videoconterence may be made available upon request. The Public Sale is being conducted by Runway Growth Finance Grp. ("Socure Party") to enforce its rights ac collateral agent pursuant to that certain bean and Socurity Agreement, dated as of May 13, 2019 gast and Sacort as collateral agent pursuant to that certain bean and Socurity Agreement, dated as of May 13, 2019 gast and Agent a security Literost. In the Sale Assists to secure parts and pursuant to the toan Agreement. Certain of the Sale Assets were transferred to Assignee subject to Secure Party's sportify interest. The outstanding principal balance under the Loan Agreement as of the Other 19, 2023 is not less than S2358236383, plus acruad interest, reas and expanses.

The not resp. Gala 25,962,562,56, picts active interest, Tops and expanses. Gen Parties were previously in the Jusiness of development and sale of hyperconverged imastructure and video surveillance systems. In July 2021, Loan Parties cessed operalloos, Pivot3 transferred substantially all assets to Assignee in an assignment for the benefit of creditors, and the software product of Pivot3 previously known as "Pivot3" was sold, and certain related underlying registered patients were exclusively licensed pursuant to a fully pald-up, royalty-free, worldwide, perpetual license for the video surveillance field (the "Existing License"). The Sale Assets consist primarily of Intellectual property registered in the name of Loan Parties with the US PTO and IP offices of other juriscitions, which is being sold subject to the Existing License, and the shares of Pivot3 and NexGen, which are piedged as collateral. The Sale Assets may be officered in gae or more lots

subject to the Existing License and the shares of Pivot3 and NexGen, which are pledged as collateral. The Sale Assets may be offered in one or more lots at the discription of Secured Party, and will be sold on, a strictly, 245 (S. WHERE IS' basis, with all Rauts, and without recourse to Secured Party or any lender under the Loan Agreement, without any representation or variantly, express or implied, as to the title, value, condition, metchantability or fitness for use of any of the Sale Assets or any other representation or variantly with respect to the Sale Assets whatSoever, which are heredy disclamed, except for certain limited representations of Agent as expressity set forth in a form Asset Purchase Agreement which will be available upon request by any qualified party interested in bidding on the Sale Assets. Secured Party intends to sell the Sale Assets to the highest or otherwise best qualified bidder at the Public Sale. The Public Sale will be for cash or credit against austranding indetedenses under the Loan Agreement, and subject to commercially reasonable bid procedures and other requirements established by Secured Party, which will be available upon request. Secured Party, which will be available upon request and of the Sale Assets and to modify the terms, conditions, or procedures for the Public Sale or continue the Public Sale to any reason. In Secured Party contends to the Sale asset sourced Party solication.

Any inquiries regarding the sale or the Sale Assets should be directed to Avisha Khubani at ak@ runwaycowth.com no later than December 14, 2023, 12:00 pm (Pacific time).

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