Case 1:17-cv-03736-WSD-CMS Document 1 Filed 09/25/17 Page 1 of 9 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA ATLANTA DIVISION

YOLANDER COLE, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated,

Plaintiffs,

-against-

Civil Case Number:

CIVIL ACTION

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT AND DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

CONTRACT CALLERS, INC.,

Defendants.

Plaintiff YOLANDER COLE (hereinafter, "Plaintiff"), a Georgia resident, brings this class action complaint by and through the undersigned attorneys, against Defendant CONTRACT CALLERS, INC. (hereinafter "Defendant" or "CCI"), individually and on behalf of a class of all others similarly situated, pursuant to Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, based upon information and belief of Plaintiff's counsel, except for allegations specifically pertaining to Plaintiff, which are based upon Plaintiff's personal knowledge.

INTRODUCTION/PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

- Congress enacted the FDCPA in 1977 in response to the "abundant evidence of the use of abusive, deceptive, and unfair debt collection practices by many debt collectors." 15 U.S.C. § 1692(a). At that time, Congress was concerned that "abusive debt collection practices contribute to the number of personal bankruptcies, to material instability, to the loss of jobs, and to invasions of individual privacy." *Id.* Congress concluded that "existing laws . . . [we]re inadequate to protect consumers," and that "the effective collection of debts" does not require "misrepresentation or other abusive debt collection practices." 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692(b) & (c).
- 2. Congress explained that the purpose of the Act was not only to eliminate abusive debt collection practices, but also to "insure that those debt collectors who refrain from using

- Case 1:17-cv-03736-WSD-CMS Document 1 Filed 09/25/17 Page 2 of 9 abusive debt collection practices are not competitively disadvantaged." *Id.* § 1692(e). After determining that the existing consumer protection laws were inadequate, *id.* § 1692(b), Congress gave consumers a private cause of action against debt collectors who fail to comply with the Act. *Id.* § 1692k.
- The rights and obligations established by section 15 U.S.C. § 1692g were considered by the Senate at the time of passage of the FDCPA to be a "significant feature" of the Act. See S. Rep. No. 382, 95th Cong., 1st Sess. 4, at 4, reprinted in 1977 U.S.C.C.A.N. 1695, 1696.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 4. The Court has jurisdiction over this class action under 28 U.S.C. § 1331, 15 U.S.C. § 1692 et seq. and 28 U.S.C. § 2201. If applicable, the Court also has pendent jurisdiction over the state law claims in this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367(a).
- 5. Venue is proper in this judicial district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(2).

NATURE OF THE ACTION

- 6. Plaintiff brings this class action on behalf of a class of Georgia consumers seeking redress for Defendant's actions of using false, deceptive and misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of an alleged debt.
- 7. Defendant's actions violated § 1692 et seq. of Title 15 of the United States Code, commonly referred to as the Fair Debt Collections Practices Act ("<u>FDCPA</u>") which prohibits debt collectors from engaging in false, deceptive or misleading practices.
- 8. Plaintiff is seeking damages, and declaratory and injunctive relief.

PARTIES

- Plaintiff is a natural person and a resident of the State of Georgia, and is a "Consumer" as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692(a)(3).
- 10. Defendant Contract Callers, Inc. is a collection agency with its registered agent located at CSC, 40 Technology Parkway South, #300, Gwinnett, Norcross, Georgia 30092.

Case 1:17-cv-03736-WSD-CMS Document 1 Filed 09/25/17 Page 3 of 9 11. Upon information and belief, Defendant is a company that uses the mail, telephone, or facsimile in a business the principal purpose of which is the collection of debts, or that regularly collects or attempts to collect debts alleged to be due another.

12. Defendant is a "debt collector," as defined under the FDCPA under 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(6).

CLASS ALLEGATIONS

- 13. Plaintiff brings claims, pursuant to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (hereinafter "FRCP") Rule 23, individually and on behalf of the following consumer class (the "Class") consisting of: a) All consumers who have an address in the state of Georgia b) who were sent a collection letter from the Defendant c) attempting to collect a consumer debt allegedly owed to DeKalb Medical Center, that d) attempts to charge a \$5.00 processing fee for online payments (e) when no such fee was expressly permitted by the contract creating the debt or permitted by law (f) which letter was sent on or after a date one year prior to the filing of this action and on or before a date 21 days after the filing of this action.
- 14. The identities of all class members are readily ascertainable from the records of Defendants and those companies and entities on whose behalf they attempt to collect and/or have purchased debts.
- 15. Excluded from the Plaintiff Classes are the Defendants and all officers, members, partners, managers, directors, and employees of the Defendants and their respective immediate families, and legal counsel for all parties to this action and all members of their immediate families.
- 16. There are questions of law and fact common to the Plaintiff Classes, which common issues predominate over any issues involving only individual class members. The principal issue is whether the Defendants' written communications to consumers, in the forms attached as *Exhibit A*, violate 15 U.S.C. § 1692e and 1692f.

Case 1:17-cv-03736-WSD-CMS Document 1 Filed 09/25/17 Page 4 of 9 17. The Plaintiffs' claims are typical of the class members, as all are based upon the same facts and legal theories.

- 18. The Plaintiffs will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Plaintiff Classes defined in this complaint. The Plaintiffs have retained counsel with experience in handling consumer lawsuits, complex legal issues, and class actions, and neither the Plaintiffs nor their attorneys have any interests, which might cause them not to vigorously pursue this action.
- 19. This action has been brought, and may properly be maintained, as a class action pursuant to the provisions of Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure because there is a well-defined community interest in the litigation:
 - (a) <u>Numerosity</u>: The Plaintiffs are informed and believe, and on that basis allege, that the Plaintiff Classes defined above are so numerous that joinder of all members would be impractical.
 - (b) <u>Common Questions Predominate:</u> Common questions of law and fact exist as to all members of the Plaintiff Classes and those questions predominate over any questions or issues involving only individual class members. The principal issue is whether the Defendants' written communications to consumers, in the forms attached as *Exhibit A*, violate 15 U.S.C. § 1692e and 1692f.
 - (c) <u>Typicality:</u> The Plaintiffs' claims are typical of the claims of the class members.
 The Plaintiffs and all members of the Plaintiff Classes have claims arising out of the Defendants' common uniform course of conduct complained of herein.
 - (d) <u>Adequacy:</u> The Plaintiffs will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the class members insofar as Plaintiffs have no interests that are averse to the absent class members. The Plaintiffs are committed to vigorously litigating this matter. Plaintiffs have also retained counsel experienced in handling consumer lawsuits, complex legal issues, and class actions. Neither the Plaintiffs nor their counsel

- Case 1:17-cv-03736-WSD-CMS Document 1 Filed 09/25/17 Page 5 of 9 have any interests which might cause them not to vigorously pursue the instant class action lawsuit.
 - (e) <u>Superiority:</u> A class action is superior to the other available means for the fair and efficient adjudication of this controversy because individual joinder of all members would be impracticable. Class action treatment will permit a large number of similarly situated persons to prosecute their common claims in a single forum efficiently and without unnecessary duplication of effort and expense that individual actions would engender.
- 20. Certification of a class under Rule 23(b)(3) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure is also appropriate in that the questions of law and fact common to members of the Plaintiff Classes predominate over any questions affecting an individual member, and a class action is superior to other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of the controversy.
- 21. Depending on the outcome of further investigation and discovery, Plaintiffs may, at the time of class certification motion, seek to certify a class(es) only as to particular issues pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(c)(4).

ALLEGATIONS OF FACT

- 22. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs above herein with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.
- Some time prior to September 23, 2016, an obligation was allegedly incurred to DeKalb Medical Center.
- 24. The alleged DeKalb Medical Center obligation arose out of a transaction in which money, property, insurance or services, which are the subject of the transaction, are primarily for personal, family or household purposes.
- 25. The alleged DeKalb Medical Center obligation is a "debt" as defined by 15 U.S.C.§

- Case 1:17-cv-03736-WSD-CMS Document 1 Filed 09/25/17 Page 6 of 9 1692a(5).
- 26. DeKalb Medical Center is a "creditor" as defined by 15 U.S.C.§ 1692a(4).
- 27. Defendant contends that the DeKalb Medical Center debt is past due.
- 28. Defendant is a company that uses mail, telephone or facsimile in a business the principal purpose of which is the collection of debts, or that regularly collects or attempts to collect debts incurred or alleged to have been incurred for personal, family or household purposes on behalf of creditors.
- 29. DeKalb Medical Center directly or through an intermediary contracted the Defendant to collect the alleged debt.
- 30. On or about September 23, 2016, the Defendant caused to be delivered to the Plaintiff a collection letter in an attempt to collect the alleged DeKalb Medical Center debt. See Exhibit A.
- 31. Upon information and belief, the September 23, 2016 letter was the first communication between the Defendant and Plaintiff regarding the DeKalb Medical Center debt.
- 32. The September 23, 2016 letter was sent or caused to be sent by persons employed by Defendant as a "debt collector" as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(6).
- 33. The September 23, 2016 letter is a "communication" as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(2).
- 34. The Plaintiff received and read the Letter sometime after June 23, 2016.
- 35. The Letter stated in part:

"You Currently Owe: \$445.50"

36. The Letter further stated:

"You can now pay online at: <u>www.myaccount.contractcallers.com</u> \$5.00 processing fee where allowed by law."

- 37. Upon information and belief, the Defendant has no legal or contractual right to charge a processing fee of \$5.00.
- 38. By charging the Plaintiff a fee that they were not entitled to, Defendant harmed the

- Case 1:17-cv-03736-WSD-CMS Document 1 Filed 09/25/17 Page 7 of 9 Plaintiff.
- 39. Defendants could have taken the steps necessary to bring its actions within compliance with the FDCPA, but neglected to do so and failed to adequately review its actions to ensure compliance with the law.

COUNT I

VIOLATIONS OF THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT 15 U.S.C. §1692e et seq.

- 40. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs above herein with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.
- 41. Defendants' debt collection efforts attempted and/or directed towards the Plaintiff violated various provisions of the FDCPA, including but not limited to 15 U.S.C. § 1692e.
- 42. Pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692e, a debt collector may not use any false,misleading and/or deceptive means to collect or attempt to collect any debt orto obtain information concerning a consumer.
- 43. The Defendants violated said section in its letter to the Plaintiff by:
 - a. Using a false, deceptive, and misleading representations or means in connection with the collection of a debt;
 - b. Falsely representing the amount of the alleged debt in violation of 1692e(2)(A);
 - c. Making a false representation or using deceptive means to collect a debt in violation of 1692e(10).
- 44. By reason thereof, Defendant is liable to Plaintiff for judgment that Defendant's conduct violated Section 1692e *et seq.* of the FDCPA, actual damages, statutory

Case 1:17-cv-03736-WSD-CMS Document 1 Filed 09/25/17 Page 8 of 9 damages, costs and attorneys' fees.

COUNT II

VIOLATIONS OF THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT 15 U.S.C. §1692f et seq.

- 45. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and incorporates the allegations contained in the paragraphs numbered above with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.
- 46. Defendants' debt collection efforts attempted and/or directed towards the Plaintiff violated various provisions of the FDCPA, including but not limited to 15 U.S.C. § 1692f(1).
- 47. Pursuant to 15 USC §1692f(1), a debt collector may not use unfair or unconscionable means to collect or attempt to collect any debt. Without limiting the general application of the foregoing, the following conduct is a violation of this section: (1) The collection of any amount (including interest, fee, charge, or expense incidental to the principal obligation) unless such amount is expressly authorized by the agreement creating the debt or permitted by law.
- 48. Defendants violated said section by charging a fee not expressly authorized by the agreement creating the debt or permitted by law.
- 49. By reason thereof, Defendant is liable to Plaintiff for judgment that Defendant's conduct violated Section 1692f *et seq*. of the FDCPA, actual damages, statutory damages, costs and attorneys' fees.

DEMAND FOR TRIAL BY JURY.

43. Pursuant to Rule 38 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Plaintiff hereby request a trial by jury on all issues so triable.

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PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff demands judgment against Defendants as follows:

- (a) Declaring that this action is properly maintainable as a Class Action and certifying Plaintiff as Class representative and undersigned as Class Counsel;
 - (b) Awarding Plaintiff and the Class statutory damages;
 - (c) Awarding Plaintiff and the Class actual damages;
 - (d) Awarding Plaintiff costs of this Action, including reasonable attorneys'

fees and expenses;

- (e) Awarding pre-judgment interest and post-judgment interest; and
- (f) Awarding Plaintiff and the Class such other and further relief as this

Court may deem just and proper.

Dated: September 20, 2017

By:

s/ Misty Ann Oaks Misty Ann Oaks, Esq. The Oaks Firm 3315 Charlston Court Decatur, Georgia 30034 Tel: (404) 725-5697 Fax: (775) 320-3695 Attorneys for Plaintiff

PRO HAC VICE APPLICATION TO BE FILED

Yitzchak Zelman, Esq. MARCUS ZELMAN, LLC 1500 Allaire Avenue, Suite 101 Ocean, New Jersey 07712 Phone: (732) 695-3282 Facsimile: (732) 298-6256 Email: <u>ari@marcuszelman.com</u> *Attorneys for Plaintiff*

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PO Box 2207	TO PAY BY CREDIT CARD, PLEASE COMPLETE THIS SECTION	ש ם	SA	MosterCord	
Augusta, GA 30903-2207	CARD NUMBER		EXP. DATE		
Personal & Confidential 25	SIGNATURE		SECURITY CODE		
	ACCOUNT #	CIRCLE OPTION	AMOUNT		
Address Changed? Make Changes Below			d		
Interpretation Interpr					
>Billing Phone Number: >E-Mail Address:					
 Make check or money order payable to Contract Callers Inc. By Phone: 800-288-1179 Please Detach And Return in The Enclosed Envelope With Your Payment A 					
			Ho	ours of Operation	
				by 9AM-8PM ES1 by 9AM-1PM EST eptember 23, 2016	
501 Greene Street, 3rd Floor Saite 302 • Augustz, GA 30901 800-288-1179					
Current Account Number: 2019 Original Account Number: 2019 6000 Customer Name: FIRST FINANCIAL INVESTMENT FUND V, LLC. Original Creditor: DeKalb Medical Center You Currently Owe: \$445.58 Dear Yolander Cole, Sectiones difficult situations arise that can cause financial hardship. We want to help you resolve your account and have developed three					
Some times difficult situations arise that can cause financial hardship. We want to help you resolve your account and have developed three affordable controls for you to pay off this account. Please call our toll free number 800-288-1179 to make arrangements and cease collection activity. We want to keep you to know that you do have options to resolve this account?					
DESCOLINT OFFER Pay S311.85 (30% Reduction) and your account will be considered "Sansfied" after we post your payment. We are not required to rear this offer.					
MONTHLY PAYMENT PLAN Pay 4 membry installments: 3 canel payments of \$111.38 and a final payment of \$111.36. Your account will be considered "Satisfied" after your final payment posts to your account.					
3 FINANCIAL HARDSHIP PLAN Contact one of our Professional Representatives to qualify for our various payment options.					
This communication is from a debt collector. This is an attempt to collect a debt and any information obtained will be used for that purpose. Unless you notify this office within 30 days after receiving this notice that you dispute the validity of this debt or any portion thereof, this office will assume this debt is valid. If you notify this office in writing within 30 days after receiving this notice that you dispute the validity of this debt or any portion thereof, this office will obtain verification of the debt or obtain a copy of a judgment and mail you a copy of such judgment or verification. If you request of this office in writing within 30 days after receiving this notice. This office will provide you with the name and address of the original creditor, if different from the current creditor.					
Call Toll-Free 808-288-1179 to discuss payment arrangements Let us prove how committed we are to working with you!					
You can now pay online at: www.myaccount.contractcallers.com \$5.00 processing fee where allowed by law.					
Pay by mail to: Contract Callers, Inc. • PO BOX 2207 AUGUSTA, • GA 30903-2207					
The law limits how long you can be sued on a debt. Because of the age of your debt, we will not sue you for it, and we will not report it to any credit reporting agencies.					

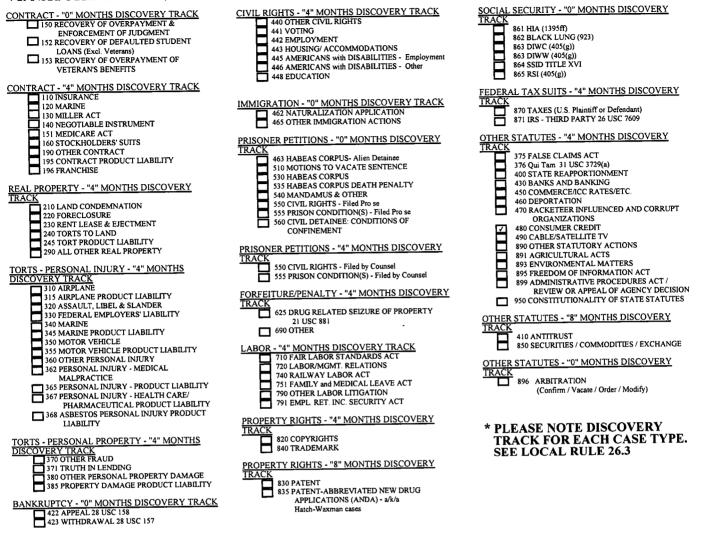
Case 1:17-cv-03736-WSD-CMS Document 1-2 Filed 09/25/17 Page 1 of 2 JS44 (Rev. 6/2017 NDGA) CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket record. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ATTACHED)

I. (a) PLAINTIFF(S)		DEFENDANT(S)		
YOLANDER COLE, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated		CONTRACT CALLERS, INC.		
(b) COUNTY OF RESIDENCE OF FIRST LISTED PLAINTIFF Rockdale (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)		COUNTY OF RESIDENCE OF FIRST LISTED DEFENDANT (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY) NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED		
(c) ATTORNEYS (FIRM NAME, ADDRESS, TELEPHONE NUMBER, AND E-MAIL ADDRESS)		ATTORNEYS (IF KNOWN)		
The Oaks Firm 3515 Charleston Court Decatur, GA 30034 Tel: 4004.725.5697 Email: attyoaks@yahoo.com				
II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION (PLACE AN "X" IN ONE BOX ONLY)	III. CITI (place /	ZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES NN "X" IN ONE BOX FOR PLAINTIFF AND ONE BOX FOR DEFENDANT) (FOR DIVERSITY CASES ONLY)		
1 U.S. GOVERNMENT Image: Structure of the str	$\Box_2 \Box_2 c$ $\Box_3 \Box_3 c$	PLF DEF ITIZEN OF THIS STATE 4 4 INCORPORATED OR PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS IN THIS STATE ITIZEN OF ANOTHER STATE 5 5 INCORPORATED AND PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS IN ANOTHER STATE ITIZEN OR SUBJECT OF A 6 6 FOREIGN NATION OREIGN COUNTRY		
IV. ORIGIN (PLACE AN "X "IN ONE BOX ONLY) I ORIGINAL PROCEEDING 2 REMOVED FROM APPELLATE COURT 3 REMANDED FROM APPELLATE COURT	4 REINSTATEI REOPENED	D OR SANOTHER DISTRICT Specify District) MULTIDISTRICT APPEAL TO DISTRICT JUDGE (Specify District) Generation - 17 FROM MAGISTRATE JUDGE TRANSFER JUDGMENT		
MULTIDISTRICT 8 LITIGATION - DIRECT FILE				
V. CAUSE OF ACTION (CITE THE U.S. CIVIL STATUTE JURISDICTIONAL STATUTES UN	UNDER WHICH Y(DU ARE FILING AND WRITE A BRIEF STATEMENT OF CAUSE - DO NOT CITE		
15 U.S.C. 1692				
Defendant violated the FDCPA				
(IF COMPLEX, CHECK REASON BELOW)				
1. Unusually large number of parties.		blems locating or preserving evidence		
2. Unusually large number of claims or defenses.	_	nding parallel investigations or actions by government.		
3. Factual issues are exceptionally complex		ultiple use of experts.		
4. Greater than normal volume of evidence.		eed for discovery outside United States boundaries.		
5. Extended discovery period is needed.	∐ 10. Ex	istence of highly technical issues and proof.		
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(Referral)

VI. NATURE OF SUIT (PLACE AN "X" IN ONE BOX ONLY)



VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:

CHECK IF CLASS ACTION UNDER F.R.Civ.P. 23 DEMAND \$______ JURY DEMAND VES IN NO (CHECK YES ONLY IF DEMANDED IN COMPLAINT)

VIII. RELATED/REFILED CASE(S) IF ANY JUDGE

DOCKET NO.

CIVIL CASES ARE DEEMED RELATED IF THE PENDING CASE INVOLVES: (CHECK APPROPRIATE BOX)

1. PROPERTY INCLUDED IN AN EARLIER NUMBERED PENDING SUIT.

- □ 2. SAME ISSUE OF FACT OR ARISES OUT OF THE SAME EVENT OR TRANSACTION INCLUDED IN AN EARLIER NUMBERED PENDING SUIT.
- □ 3. VALIDITY OR INFRINGEMENT OF THE SAME PATENT, COPYRIGHT OR TRADEMARK INCLUDED IN AN EARLIER NUMBERED PENDING SUIT.

4. APPEALS ARISING OUT OF THE SAME BANKRUPTCY CASE AND ANY CASE RELATED THERETO WHICH HAVE BEEN DECIDED BY THE SAME BANKRUPTCY JUDGE.

□ 5. REPETITIVE CASES FILED BY <u>PRO SE</u> LITIGANTS.

6. COMPANION OR RELATED CASE TO CASE(S) BEING SIMULTANEOUSLY FILED (INCLUDE ABBREVIATED STYLE OF OTHER CASE(S)):

□ 7. EITHER SAME OR ALL OF THE PARTIES AND ISSUES IN THIS CASE WERE PREVIOUSLY INVOLVED IN CASE NO. DISMISSED. This case □ IS □ IS NOT (check one box) SUBSTANTIALLY THE SAME CASE.

, WHICH WAS

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: <u>Contract Callers Sued Over Online 'Processing Fee'</u>