UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA ATLANTA DIVISION

CYNTHIA HARRIS, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated, Plaintiff, V. **ALLIED COLLECTION & CREDIT** BUREAU, INC., and John Does 1-25,

Defendant.

CIVIL ACTION NO.

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Plaintiff Cynthia Harris (hereinafter, "Plaintiff"), a Georgia resident, brings this Class Action Complaint by and through her undersigned attorneys, against Allied Collection & Credit Bureau, Inc. (hereinafter "Defendant"), 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

1. Congress enacted the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act ("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 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.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

3. The Court has jurisdiction over this class action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 and 15 U.S.C. § 1692 *et. seq*. The Court also has pendent jurisdiction over the State law claims in this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367(a).

4. Venue is proper in this judicial district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(2).

NATURE OF THE ACTION

5. Plaintiff brings this class action on behalf of a class of Georgia consumers under § 1692 et seq. of Title 15 of the United States Code, commonly referred to as the Fair Debt Collections Practices Act.

6. Plaintiff is seeking damages and declaratory and injunctive relief.

PARTIES

7. Plaintiff is a resident of the State of Georgia, County of Cobb, residing at 1010 Kennesborough Road, Kennesaw, GA 30144.

8. Allied Collection and Credit Bureau, Inc. is a "debt collector" as the phrase is defined in 15 U.S.C. § 1692(a)(6) and used in the FDCPA with an address at 8600 Pendergrass Road, Hoschton, GA 30548-2300.

9. Upon information and belief, Defendant is a company that uses the mail, telephone, and facsimile and regularly engages in business the principal purpose of which is to attempt to collect debts alleged to be due another.

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

11. John Does 1-25, are fictitious names of individuals and businesses alleged for the purpose of substituting names of Defendants whose identities will be disclosed in discovery and should be made parties to this action.

CLASS ALLEGATIONS

12. Plaintiff brings this claim on behalf of the following case, pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(a) and 23(b)(3).

- 13. The Class consists of:
 - a. all individuals with addresses in the State of Georgia;
 - b. to whom Allied Collection & Credit Bureau, Inc. sent an initial collection letter attempting to collect a consumer debt;
 - c. that made threats in this collection letter to negatively report on consumers' credit accounts;
 - d. and made deceptive threats which overshadowed the ability to invoke consumers rights;

e. which letter was sent on or after a date one (1) year prior to the filing of this action and on or before a date twenty-one (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. §1692g.

17. The Plaintiff's claims are typical of the class members, as all are based upon the same facts and legal theories. The Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Plaintiff Classes defined in this complaint. The Plaintiff has retained counsel with experience in handling consumer lawsuits, complex legal issues, and class actions, and neither the Plaintiff nor her attorneys have any interests, which might cause them not to vigorously pursue this action.

18. 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 Plaintiff is 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. §1692g.
- c. <u>Typicality:</u> The Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the class members. The Plaintiff 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 Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the class members insofar as Plaintiff has no interests that are adverse to the absent class members. The Plaintiffs are committed to vigorously litigating this matter. Plaintiff has also retained counsel experienced in handling consumer lawsuits, complex legal issues, and class actions. Neither the Plaintiffs nor their counsel 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.

19. 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.

20. 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).

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

21. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs numbered above herein with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.

22. Some time prior to October 6, 2016, an obligation of Plaintiff's was allegedly incurred to Quantum Radiology.

23. The Quantum Radiology obligation arose out of a personal medical debt, in other words, transactions in which money, property, insurance or services, which are the subject of the transaction, are primarily for personal, family or household purposes.

24. The alleged Quantum Radiology obligation is a "debt" as defined by 15U.S.C.§ 1692a(5).

25. Quantum Radiology is a "creditor" as defined by 15 U.S.C.§ 1692a(4).

26. Quantum Radiology or a subsequent owner of the Quantum Radiology debt contracted the Defendant to collect the alleged debt.

27. Defendant collects and attempts to collect debts incurred or alleged to have been incurred for personal, family or household purposes on behalf of creditors using the United States Postal Services, telephone and internet.

Violation I – October 6, 2016 Collection Letter

28. On or about October 6, 2016, Defendant caused to be delivered to the Plaintiff an initial contact notice (the "Collection Letter") regarding the alleged debt owed to Quantum Radiology. **See Exhibit A**.

29. The October 6, 2016 Collection Letter is a "communication" as defined by 15. U.S.C. §1692a(2).

30. The October 6, 2016 Collection Letter was an initial communication letter.

31. When a debt collector solicits payment from a consumer, it must, within five days of an initial communication, provide the consumer with a written validation notice which must include the following information:

(1) the amount of the debt;

(2) the name of the creditor to whom the debt is owed;

(3) a statement that unless the consumer, within thirty days after receipt of the notice, disputes the validity of the debt, or any portion thereof, the debt will be assumed to be valid by the debt collector;

(4) a statement that if the consumer notifies the debt collector in writing within the thirty-day period that the debt, or any portion thereof, is disputed, the debt collector will obtain verification of the debt or a copy of the judgment against the consumer and a copy of such verification or judgment will be mailed to the consumer by the debt collector; and

(5) a statement that, upon the consumer's written request within the thirtyday period, the debt collector will provide the consumer with the name and address of the original creditor, if different from the current creditor. 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a).

32. The FDCPA further provides that if the consumer notifies the debt collector in writing within the thirty day period . . . that the debt, or any portion thereof, is disputed . . . the debt collector shall cease collection . . . until the debt collector obtains verification of the debt . . . and a copy of such verification is mailed to the consumer by the debt collector. 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(b).

33. This letter contains all the requirements of "G Notice" but it is completely overshadowed by the earlier language in the letter.

34. Specifically, the letter states "FINAL WRITTEN NOTICE *** YOUR CREDIT MAY BE AFFECTED"

35. Although a collection letter may track the statutory language, "the collector nonetheless violates the Act if it conveys that information in a confusing or contradictory fashion so as to cloud the required message with uncertainty." *Russel v. EQUIFAX A.R.S.*, 74 F.3d 30, 35 (2^d Cir. 1996) ("It is not enough for a debt collection agency simply to include the proper debt validation notice in a mailing to a consumer –Congress intended that such notice be clearly conveyed.") Put differently, a notice containing "language that 'overshadows or contradicts' other language informing a consumer of her rights … violates the Act." *Russell*, 74 F.3d at 34.

36. Defendant's threat this is its FINAL WRITTEN NOTICE leads a consumer to believe that she must make payment immediately before further action is taken against her.

37. Defendant's threat that YOUR CREDIT MAY BE AFFECTED is a further example of overshadowing in that it coerces the consumer she must pay immediately to avoid damage to her credit when, in actuality, she has thirty days under the statute to dispute the debt. 38. These threats overshadow Plaintiff's rights to dispute or validate the debt pursuant to the "G-Notice" and violate §1692g(b).

39. Additionally, it is deceptive and misleading to make threats of immediate harm to a consumer's credit score when, in truth, she has thirty days to dispute the debt.

40. As a result of Defendant's deceptive, misleading and unfair debt collection practices, Plaintiff has been damaged.

41. Defendant's actions as described herein are part of a pattern and practice used to collect consumer debts.

42. Defendant 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

43. This letter from Defendant to Plaintiff was a collection communications in violation of numerous and multiple provisions of the FDCPA, including but not limited to 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692g, 1692e, 1692e(2), 1692e(5), 1692e(10) and 1692f.

<u>COUNT I</u> VIOLATIONS OF THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT 15 U.S.C. §1692f *et seq*.

44. 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.

45. Defendant's debt collection efforts attempted and/or directed towards Plaintiff violate various provisions of the FDCPA, including but not limited to 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692g, 1692e, 1692e(2), 1692e(5), 1692e(10), 1692f, and 1692f(1).

46. As a result of the Defendant's violations of the FDCPA, Plaintiff has been damaged and is entitled to damages in accordance with the FDCPA.

DEMAND FOR TRIAL BY JURY

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

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff Cynthia Harris, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated, demands judgment from Allied Collection & Credit Bureau, Inc. and John Does 1-25, as follows:

1. Declaring that this action is properly maintainable as a Class Action and certifying Plaintiff as Class representative, and Jonathan B. Mason, Esq. as Class Counsel;

2. Awarding Plaintiff and the Class statutory damages;

3. Awarding Plaintiff and the Class actual damages;

4. Awarding Plaintiff costs of this Action, including reasonable attorneys' fees and expenses;

5. Awarding pre-judgment interest and post-judgment interest; and

6. Awarding Plaintiff and the Class such other and further relief as this Court may deem just and proper.

Dated: October 4, 2017

/s/Jonathan B. Mason

Jonathan B. Mason Mason Law Group, P.C. Georgia Bar No. 475659 1100 Peachtree St, NE, Ste 200 Atlanta, GA 30309 Phone: 404-920-8040 Fax: 404-920-8039 jmason@atlshowbizlaw.com Attorneys for Plaintiff

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE WITH LOCAL RULE 7.1D

Pursuant to Local Rule 7.1D, the undersigned counsel certifies that this document has been prepared using Times New Roman 14-point font.

This 4th day of October, 2017

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/ Jonathan B. Mason Jonathan B. Mason, Esq. Case 1:17-cv-03897-LMM-AJB Document 1-1 Filed 10/04/17 Page 1 of 2

EXHIBIT A

Case 1:17-cv-03897-LMM-AJB Document 1-1 Filed 10/04/17 Page 2 of 20/ 6/2016 P O BOX 640 HOSCHTON GA 30548 edit Bureau, Inc.

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Account #		2- 1536689 336848-201610	03
Client's #: Patient 103	5617 (NTHIA HARR)	\$ \$55.	20
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Service Dal	6.	770 - 783 - 69	9

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Dear CYNTHIA MARRIS *******FINAL WRITTEN NOTICE**YOUR CREDIT MAY BE AFFECTED****** The above client has requested that we contact you regarding your seriously overdue account. In order to satisfy this debt, action on your part is necessary. Contact our office to discuss options for resolving this past due account your credit rating could be affected.

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 not-ify this office in writing within 30 days from receiving this notice, this office will: obtain verification of the debt or ob-tain a copy of a judgment and mail you a copy of such judgment or verification. If you request 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. This is an attempt to collect a debt and any information will be used for that purpose.

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To Ensure Proper Credit, Please Return Bottom Portion With Your Payment Credit Cards will be processed by Billing Processing Center.

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2- 153668936 \$55.20

CZNTHIA HAPRIS 336848-20161003

Gredit Gare A CC Security Code # Expiration Date: Amount Print Name: Signature

5517

Allied Collection & Credit Bureau, Inc. Residence Avagesta

JS44 (Rev. 11/16 NDGA) ase 1:17-cv-03897-LMM-APPIL DOOVER SHEEFiled 10/04/17 Page 1 of 2

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)		
Cynthia Harris, individually and on behalf of all oth	ners similarly	Allied Collection & Credit Bureau, Inc., and John Does 1-25		
situated				
(b) COUNTY OF RESIDENCE OF FIRST LISTED PLAINTIFF Cobb	COUNTY OF RESIDENCE OF FIRST LISTED DEFENDANT			
(EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)		(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)		
Jonathan B. Mason, Esq.				
Mason Law Group, P.C.				
1100 Peachtree Street, NE, Suite 200				
Atlanta, GA 30309 404.920.8040 jmason@atlshowbizlaw.com				
II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION		ZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES		
(PLACE AN "X" IN ONE BOX ONLY)	(PLACE A	N "X" IN ONE BOX FOR PLAINTIFF AND ONE BOX FOR DEFENDANT) (FOR DIVERSITY CASES ONLY)		
	PLF DEF	PLF DEF		
1 U.S. GOVERNMENT PLAINTIFF (U.S. GOVERNMENT NOT A PARTY)		TIZEN OF THIS STATE 4 INCORPORATED OR PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS IN THIS STATE		
$\square_2 \text{ u.s. GOVERNMENT} \qquad \square_4 \text{ DIVERSITY}$		TIZEN OF ANOTHER STATE 5 5 incorporated and principal		
DEFENDANT (INDICATE CITIZENSHIP OF PARTIES IN ITEM III)		PLACE OF BUSINESS IN ANOTHER STATE		
, ,		TIZEN OR SUBJECT OF A 6 6 FOREIGN NATION DREIGN COUNTRY		
IV. ORIGIN (PLACE AN "X "IN ONE BOX ONLY)	□	TRANSFERRED FROM MULTIDISTRICT APPEAL TO DISTRICT JUDGE		
1 ORIGINAL 2 REMOVED FROM 3 REMANDED FROM PROCEEDING STATE COURT APPELLATE COURT	4 REINSTATED REOPENED	OR5 ANOTHER DISTRICT6 LITIGATION7 FROM MAGISTRATE JUDGE (Specify District) TRANSFER JUDGMENT		
MULTIDISTRICT				
B LITIGATION - DIRECT FILE				
V. CAUSE OF ACTION (CITE THE U.S. CIVIL STATUTE U JURISDICTIONAL STATUTES UNI	UNDER WHICH YOU	ARE FILING AND WRITE A BRIEF STATEMENT OF CAUSE - DO NOT CITE		
collection letter in violation of the FDCPA.	actices Act (FDCPA") - Defendant sent Plaintiff a misleading and deceptive		
(IF COMPLEX, CHECK REASON BELOW)				
1. Unusually large number of parties. 6. Prob		lems locating or preserving evidence		
		ing parallel investigations or actions by government.		
3. Factual issues are exceptionally complex	8. Mult	iple use of experts.		
4. Greater than normal volume of evidence.	9. Nee	d for discovery outside United States boundaries.		
\Box_5 . Extended discovery period is needed.	_	tence of highly technical issues and proof.		
CONTINUED ON REVERSE				
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY	ONTINUED			
RECEIPT # AMOUNT \$	APPLYIN	G IFP MAG, JUDGE (IFP)		

NATURE OF SUIT

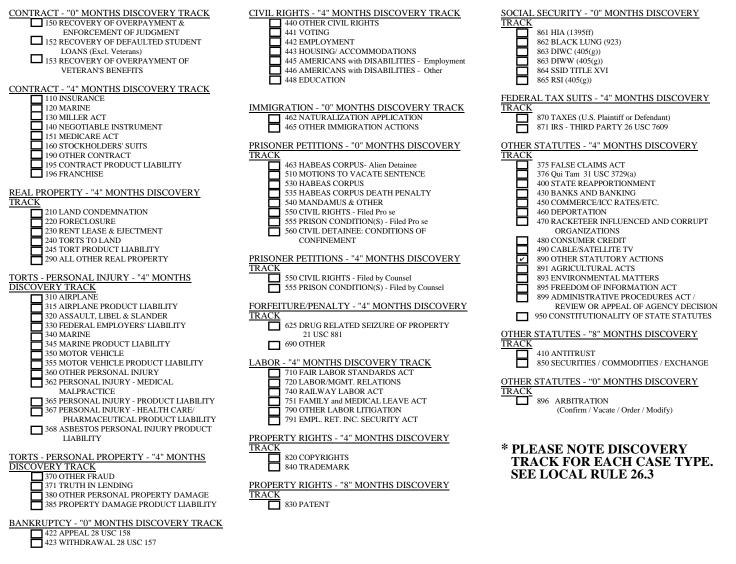
CAUSE OF ACTION

AMOUNT \$	
MAG. JUDGE	
	(Referral)

JUDGE

Case 1:17-cv-03897-LMM-AJB Document 1-2 Filed 10/04/17 Page 2 of 2

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 └ YES □ NO (CHECK YES <u>ONLY</u> 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 PRO SE 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

/s/ Jonathan B. Mason

SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD

October 4, 2017

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: <u>Georgia Woman Claims Debt Collector Made Unlawful Threat in Mailed Notice</u>