

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

ELIZABETH TAUBENFLIEGEL
on behalf of herself and
all other similarly situated consumers

Plaintiff,

-against-

MILLER & MILONE, P.C.

Defendant.

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

Introduction

1. Plaintiff Elizabeth Taubenfliegel seeks redress for the illegal practices of Miller & Milone, P.C. concerning the collection of debts, in violation of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1692, *et seq.* (“FDCPA”).

Parties

2. Plaintiff is a citizen of the State of New York who resides within this District.
3. Plaintiff is a consumer as that term is defined by Section 1692(a)(3) of the FDCPA, in that the alleged debt that Defendant sought to collect from Plaintiff is a consumer debt.
4. Upon information and belief, Defendant's principal place of business is located in Garden City, New York.
5. Defendant is regularly engaged, for profit, in the collection of debts allegedly owed by consumers.
6. Defendant is a “debt collector” as that term is defined by the FDCPA, 15 U.S.C. § 1692(a)(6).

Jurisdiction and Venue

7. This Court has federal question jurisdiction under 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(d) and 28 U.S.C. § 1331.
8. Venue is proper in this district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b), as the acts and transactions that give rise to this action occurred, in substantial part, in this district.

Allegations Particular to Elizabeth Taubenfliegel

9. Upon information and belief, on a date better known by Defendant, Defendant began to attempt to collect an alleged consumer debt from the Plaintiff.
10. On or about April 4, 2017, Defendant sent the Plaintiff a collection letter seeking to collect a balance allegedly incurred for personal purposes.
11. The said April 4, 2017 letter was Defendant's initial communication with the Plaintiff.
12. Section 1692g of the FDCPA requires that, within 5 days of a debt collector's first communication to a consumer, it must provide consumers with several pieces of information – the amount of the debt, the 30-day validation notice and “(2) the name of the creditor to whom the debt is owed”, see, 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a).
13. It is not enough to provide the information required by § 1692g of the FDCPA; rather, that information must be effectively conveyed.¹
14. The Defendant's letter was supposed to identify the name “NEW YORK-PRESBYTERIAN/BROOKLYN METHODIST” either as the “original creditor,”

¹ Datiz v. Int'l Recovery Assocs., No. 15-CV-3549 (ADS)(AKT), 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 102695, at *14-33 (E.D.N.Y. Aug. 4, 2016). (The Court is not convinced that the least sophisticated consumer would be able to deduce from the caption, "Re: John T. Mather Hospital," that John T. Mather Hospital is the current creditor to whom the Plaintiff's debt is owed for purposes of Section 1692g(a)(2), particularly given the fact that the Letter does not specify the Defendant's relationship to John T. Mather Hospital.), McGinty v. Prof'l Claims Bureau, Inc., 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 143627 ([Defendant's] Collection Letters are similarly deficient because: (i) the letters' captions, which read "Re: NSLIJ PHYSICIANS - DEPT OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY" and "Re: ST CATHERINE OF SIENNA," fail to identify the Medical Providers as Plaintiffs' current creditors; and (ii) the letters, which state that "[t]he above referenced account has been referred to our offices for collection," fail to make clear on whose behalf PCB was acting when it sent the Collection Letters.), Clomon v. Jackson, 988 F.2d 1314, 1993 U.S. App. LEXIS 4965 (2d Cir. Conn. 1993), Miller v. Wolpoff & Abramson, L.L.P., 321 F.3d 292, 2003 U.S. App. LEXIS 3409, 55 Fed. R. Serv. 3d (Callaghan) 746 (2d Cir. N.Y. 2003), Savino v. Computer Credit, 164 F.3d 81, 1998 U.S. App. LEXIS 31652, 42 Fed. R. Serv. 3d (Callaghan) 1154 (2d Cir. N.Y. 1998), McStay v. I.C. Sys., 308 F.3d 188, 2002 U.S. App. LEXIS 21542 (2d Cir. N.Y. 2002) see also, 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(b)., Jacobson v. Healthcare Fin. Servs., Inc., 516 F.3d 85, 90 (2d Cir. 2008) citing Russell v. Equifax A.R.S., 74 F.3d 30, 35 (2d Cir. 1996).

“current creditor,” or “the creditor to whom the debt is owed.”

15. Merely naming the creditor without specifically identifying the entity as the current creditor to whom the debt is owed is not sufficient to comply with 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a)(2).
16. An unsophisticated consumer is left in the dark as to whether or not “NEW YORK-PRESBYTERIAN/BROOKLYN METHODIST” is in fact the creditor to whom the alleged debt is owed.²
17. An unsophisticated consumer is left confused as to who the creditor is in this case.³
18. Defendant failed to effectively state “the name of the creditor to whom the debt is owed.”
19. Therefore, Defendant’s form collection letter violates §§ 1692g and 1692g(2) of the FDCPA.
20. An unsophisticated consumer would likely be deceived by Defendant's conduct.
21. Said letter is also deceptive and misleading in violation of 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e and

² Janetos v. Fulton, Friedman & Gullace, LLP, 2015 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 48774 (N.D. Ill., Apr. 13, 2015). (Thus, standing alone the fact that the form letter included the words “Asset Acceptance, LLC” [creditor] did not establish compliance with § 1692g(a)(2). The Act required [Defendant’s] letter to identify Asset Acceptance as the “creditor to whom the debt is owed.” 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a)(2). The letter had to make that identification clearly enough that the recipient would likely understand it.), Beltrez v. Credit Collection Servs., 2015 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 160161 (E.D.N.Y. Nov. 25, 2015). (“As Plaintiff has stated a plausible claim that the Defendant’s failure to explicitly and accurately name the creditor to whom the debt is owed would likely confuse the least sophisticated consumer as to the name of the actual creditor to whom the debt is owed, Defendant’s motion must be denied.”), Schneider v. TSYS Total Debt Mgmt., Inc., No. 06-C-345, 2006 WL 1982499 (B.D. Wis. July 13, 2006). (“[T]hroughout its briefs, [the debt collector] implies that the full and complete name of the creditor includes the name ‘Target.’ Yet, without the full and complete name of the creditor, be it Target National Bank, Target Customs Brokers, Inc., or a corporation that simply identifies itself by the acronym ‘T.A.R.G.E.T.’, it would be impossible for this court to decide whether [the debt collector] sufficiently identified the creditor to whom [the consumer’s] debt is owed. Moreover, given that the full and complete name of the creditor is unknown, at least to the court, and given the fact-based nature of the confusion question, it would not be appropriate, at this early stage of the litigation, for the court to determine whether the unsophisticated debtor would be confused by the collection letter.”), Amina v. WMC Mortgage Corp., No. CIV. 10-00165 JMS, 2011 WL 1869835 (D. Haw. May 16, 2011). (“[A] genuine issue of material fact exists regarding whether [the debt collector] complied with § 1692g(a)(2)’s requirement that [the debt collector] identify the current creditor. [The debt collector] identified the creditor only as ‘CHASE,’ and it should go without saying that there are multiple Chase entities. Further, there is no evidence on the record establishing that Chase is indeed the current creditor.”)

³ Lee v. Forster & Garbus LLP, 12 cv 420, 2013 WL 776740 (E.D. N.Y. 2013) (“Defendants fare no better insisting that any misidentification in the Collection Letter was immaterial. As an initial matter, this argument only could apply to the alleged Section 1692e and Section 1692f violations. Section 1692g(a)(2) specifically requires debt collectors to identify the creditor to whom the debt is owed in the initial communication or within five days of the initial communication. There is nothing in the statute requiring the identity of the creditor to be “material” to the communication. In addition, even assuming, arguendo, that a deceptive statement must be material to violate Section 1692e and Section 1692f, failing to identify the creditor here 7 after “pay to the order of” on the payment check to ensure that the debt is satisfied. Accordingly, Defendants’ materiality argument is without merit.”), Pardo v. Allied Interstate, LLC, 2015 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 125526 (S.D. Ind. Sept. 21, 2015), Walls v. United Collection Bureau, Inc., 2012 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 68079, *4-5, 2012 WL 1755751 (N.D. Ill. May 16, 2012), Deschaine v. Nat’l Enter. Sys., 2013 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 31349, *3-5 (N.D. Ill. Mar. 7, 2013).

1692e(10).

22. Said April 4, 2017 letter is deceptive and misleading as it failed to correctly identify the name of the creditor to whom the debt is owed in violation of 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(10), 1692g and 1692g(a)(2).
23. Plaintiff suffered injury in fact by being subjected to unfair and abusive practices of the Defendant.
24. Plaintiff suffered actual harm by being the target of the Defendant's misleading debt collection communications.
25. Defendant violated the Plaintiff's right not to be the target of misleading debt collection communications.
26. Defendant violated the Plaintiff's right to a truthful and fair debt collection process.
27. Defendant used materially false, deceptive, misleading representations and means in its attempted collection of Plaintiff's alleged debt.
28. Defendant's communications were designed to cause the debtor to suffer a harmful disadvantage in charting a course of action in response to Defendant's collection efforts.
29. The FDCPA ensures that consumers are fully and truthfully apprised of the facts and of their rights, the act enables them to understand, make informed decisions about, and participate fully and meaningfully in the debt collection process. The purpose of the FDCPA is to provide information that helps consumers to choose intelligently. The Defendant's false representations misled the Plaintiff in a manner that deprived her of her right to enjoy these benefits, these materially misleading statements trigger liability under section 1692e of the Act.
30. These deceptive communications additionally violated the FDCPA since they frustrate

the consumer's ability to intelligently choose his or her response.

31. As an actual and proximate result of the acts and omissions of Miller & Milone, P.C., Plaintiff has suffered including but not limited to, fear, stress, mental anguish, emotional stress and acute embarrassment for which she should be compensated in an amount to be established by a jury at trial.

AS AND FOR A FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

Violations of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act brought by Plaintiff on behalf of herself and the members of a class, as against the Defendant.

32. Plaintiff re-states, re-alleges, and incorporates herein by reference, paragraphs one (1) through thirty one (31) as if set forth fully in this cause of action.
33. This cause of action is brought on behalf of Plaintiff and the members of a class.
34. The class consists of all persons whom Defendant's records reflect resided in the State of New York and who were sent a collection letter in substantially the same form letter as the letter sent to the Plaintiff on or about April 4, 2017; and (a) the collection letter was sent to a consumer seeking payment of a personal debt; and (b) the collection letter was not returned by the postal service as undelivered; (c) and the Plaintiff asserts that the letter contained violations of 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(10), 1692g and 1692g(a)(2) for failing to correctly identify the name of the creditor to whom the debt is owed.
35. Pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23, a class action is appropriate and preferable in this case because:
- A. Based on the fact that a form collection letter is at the heart of this litigation, the class is so numerous that joinder of all members is impracticable.
 - B. There are questions of law and fact common to the class and these questions predominate over any questions affecting only individual class members. The

principal question presented by this claim is whether the Defendant violated the FDCPA.

- C. The only individual issue is the identification of the consumers who received such collection letters (*i.e.* the class members), a matter capable of ministerial determination from the records of Defendant.
- D. The claims of the Plaintiff are typical of those of the class members. All are based on the same facts and legal theories.
- E. The Plaintiff will fairly and adequately represent the class members' interests. The Plaintiff has retained counsel experienced in bringing class actions and collection-abuse claims. The Plaintiff's interests are consistent with those of the members of the class.

- 36. A class action is superior for the fair and efficient adjudication of the class members' claims. Congress specifically envisions class actions as a principal means of enforcing the FDCPA. 15 U.S.C. § 1692(k). The members of the class are generally unsophisticated individuals, whose rights will not be vindicated in the absence of a class action. Prosecution of separate actions by individual members of the classes would create the risk of inconsistent or varying adjudications resulting in the establishment of inconsistent or varying standards for the parties and would not be in the interest of judicial economy.
- 37. If the facts are discovered to be appropriate, the Plaintiff will seek to certify a class pursuant to Rule 23(b)(3) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.
- 38. Collection attempts, such as those made by the Defendant are to be evaluated by the objective standard of the hypothetical "least sophisticated consumer."

Violations of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act

39. The Defendant's actions as set forth above in the within complaint violates the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act.
40. Because the Defendant violated the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, the Plaintiff and the members of the class are entitled to damages in accordance with the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, respectfully requests preliminary and permanent injunctive relief, and that this Court enter judgment in her favor and against the Defendant and award damages as follows:

- A. Statutory damages provided under the FDCPA, 15 U.S.C. § 1692(k);
- B. Attorney fees, litigation expenses and costs incurred in bringing this action;
and
- C. Any other relief that this Court deems appropriate and just under the circumstances.

Dated: Woodmere, New York
March 27, 2018

/s/ Adam J. Fishbein
Adam J. Fishbein, P.C. (AF-9508)
Attorney At Law
Attorney for the Plaintiff
735 Central Avenue
Woodmere, New York 11598
Telephone: (516) 668-6945
Email: fishbeinadamj@gmail.com

Plaintiff requests trial by jury on all issues so triable.

/s/ Adam J. Fishbein
Adam J. Fishbein (AF-9508)

MILLER & MILONE, P.C.

ATTORNEYS AT LAW
100 Quentin Roosevelt Blvd. Suite 205
Garden City, New York 11530
Office: 516 296-1060 Fax: 516 296-1063

CHRISTINA MILONE
TAMMY ROSE LAWLOR
ALICIA A. WEISSMEIER†
CHERYL A. LEIN-TAUBENFELD
ELIZABETH MURPHY
SARA O'CONNOR
OILLIAN BALLENTINE-ALMAN‡
ROSS C. STEELE‡
SARA A. CHUSSLER
THOMAS MANZI
†ADMITTED IN NY & NJ

GUY R. MILONE, JR.
OF COUNSEL
GEORGE T. MILLER
1936-2010

NYC License No. 2045928-DCA

April 04, 2017

ELIZABETH TAUBENFLIEGEL
711 DITMAS AVENUE APT #1
BROOKLYN, NY 11218

RE: NEW YORK-PRESBYTERIAN/BROOKLYN METHODIST
[redacted] 71

Dear Sir / Madam:

This office represents NEW YORK-PRESBYTERIAN/BROOKLYN METHODIST (FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE NEW YORK METHODIST HOSPITAL) in connection with your outstanding bill. Please provide us with any insurance or other payment information that may assist us in resolving this matter.

Please indicate if you would like this hospital service to be considered for one of the Hospital's Financial Assistance Programs or Charity Care Programs.

Very truly yours,

Miller & Milone, P.C.
Account Representative:
Nadine Denis
Ext: 239

Account Information:

Patient: ELIZABETH TAUBENFLIEGEL
Hospital Account: [redacted] 09
Account: [redacted] 71
Date of Service: 03/10/2016
Balance Due: \$268.35

THIS IS AN ATTEMPT TO COLLECT A DEBT. ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. THIS CORRESPONDENCE IS FROM A DEBT COLLECTOR.

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 from receiving this notice that the debt, or any portion thereof, is disputed, we will obtain verification of the debt or a copy of a judgment and we will mail a copy of such verification or judgment to you. 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, if different from the current creditor.

Adam J. Fishbein
Adam J. Fishbein, P.C.
735 Central Avenue
Woodmere, NY 11598
516-668-6945
afishbein@nj.com

AO 440 (Rev. 06/12) Summons in a Civil Action

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Eastern District of New York

ELIZABETH TAUBENFLIEGEL)
on behalf of herself and)
all other similarly situated consumers)

Plaintiff(s))

v.)

Civil Action No.

MILLER & MILONE, P.C.)

Defendant(s))

SUMMONS IN A CIVIL ACTION

To: *(Defendant's name and address)* MILLER & MILONE, P.C.
100 QUENTIN ROOSEVELT BOULEVARD SUITE 200
GARDEN CITY, NY 11530

A lawsuit has been filed against you.

Within 21 days after service of this summons on you (not counting the day you received it) — or 60 days if you are the United States or a United States agency, or an officer or employee of the United States described in Fed. R. Civ. P. 12 (a)(2) or (3) — you must serve on the plaintiff an answer to the attached complaint or a motion under Rule 12 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. The answer or motion must be served on the plaintiff or plaintiff's attorney, whose name and address are:

If you fail to respond, judgment by default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint. You also must file your answer or motion with the court.

DOUGLAS C. PALMER
CLERK OF COURT

Date: _____

Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk

Civil Action No. _____

PROOF OF SERVICE

(This section should not be filed with the court unless required by Fed. R. Civ. P. 4 (l))

This summons for *(name of individual and title, if any)* _____
was received by me on *(date)* _____ .

I personally served the summons on the individual at *(place)* _____
_____ on *(date)* _____ ; or

I left the summons at the individual's residence or usual place of abode with *(name)* _____
_____, a person of suitable age and discretion who resides there,
on *(date)* _____ , and mailed a copy to the individual's last known address; or

I served the summons on *(name of individual)* _____ , who is
designated by law to accept service of process on behalf of *(name of organization)* _____
_____ on *(date)* _____ ; or

I returned the summons unexecuted because _____ ; or

Other *(specify)*:

My fees are \$ _____ for travel and \$ _____ for services, for a total of \$ _____ 0.00 _____ .

I declare under penalty of perjury that this information is true.

Date: _____

Server's signature

Printed name and title

Server's address

Additional information regarding attempted service, etc:

Print

Save As...

Reset

The JS 44 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, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS

ELIZABETH TAUBENFLIEGEL

(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff

(EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)

(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number)

DEFENDANTS

MILLER & MILONE, P.C.

County of Residence of First Listed Defendant NASSAU

(IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)

NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.

Attorneys (If Known)

II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff, 2 U.S. Government Defendant, 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party), 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)

III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES (Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant)

Table with columns for Plaintiff (PTF) and Defendant (DEF) citizenship: Citizen of This State, Citizen of Another State, Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country, Incorporated or Principal Place of Business In This State, Incorporated and Principal Place of Business In Another State, Foreign Nation.

IV. NATURE OF SUIT (Place an "X" in One Box Only) Nature of Suit Code Descriptions

Large table with categories: CONTRACT, REAL PROPERTY, CIVIL RIGHTS, TORTS, PRISONER PETITIONS, FORFEITURE/PENALTY, LABOR, IMMIGRATION, BANKRUPTCY, SOCIAL SECURITY, FEDERAL TAX SUITS, OTHER STATUTES.

V. ORIGIN (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- 1 Original Proceeding, 2 Removed from State Court, 3 Remanded from Appellate Court, 4 Reinstated or Reopened, 5 Transferred from Another District (specify), 6 Multidistrict Litigation - Transfer, 8 Multidistrict Litigation - Direct File

VI. CAUSE OF ACTION

Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing (Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity):

Brief description of cause: failure to state the present creditor

VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:

CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER RULE 23, F.R.Cv.P. DEMAND \$

CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint: JURY DEMAND: Yes No

VIII. RELATED CASE(S) IF ANY

(See instructions):

JUDGE DOCKET NUMBER

DATE SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD

03/28/2018

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

RECEIPT # AMOUNT APPLYING IFP JUDGE MAG. JUDGE

None

CERTIFICATION OF ARBITRATION ELIGIBILITY

Local Arbitration Rule 83.10 provides that with certain exceptions, actions seeking money damages only in an amount not in excess of \$150,000, exclusive of interest and costs, are eligible for compulsory arbitration. The amount of damages is presumed to be below the threshold amount unless a certification to the contrary is filed.

I, _____, counsel for _____, do hereby certify that the above captioned civil action is ineligible for compulsory arbitration for the following reason(s):

- monetary damages sought are in excess of \$150,000, exclusive of interest and costs,
- the complaint seeks injunctive relief,
- the matter is otherwise ineligible for the following reason class action

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT - FEDERAL RULES CIVIL PROCEDURE 7.1

Identify any parent corporation and any publicly held corporation that owns 10% or more of its stocks:

RELATED CASE STATEMENT (Section VIII on the Front of this Form)

Please list all cases that are arguably related pursuant to Division of Business Rule 50.3.1 in Section VIII on the front of this form. Rule 50.3.1 (a) provides that "A civil case is "related" to another civil case for purposes of this guideline when, because of the similarity of facts and legal issues or because the cases arise from the same transactions or events, a substantial saving of judicial resources is likely to result from assigning both cases to the same judge and magistrate judge." Rule 50.3.1 (b) provides that " A civil case shall not be deemed "related" to another civil case merely because the civil case: (A) involves identical legal issues, or (B) involves the same parties." Rule 50.3.1 (c) further provides that "Presumptively, and subject to the power of a judge to determine otherwise pursuant to paragraph (d), civil cases shall not be deemed to be "related" unless both cases are still pending before the court."

NY-E DIVISION OF BUSINESS RULE 50.1(d)(2)

- 1.) Is the civil action being filed in the Eastern District removed from a New York State Court located in Nassau or Suffolk County? Yes No
- 2.) If you answered "no" above:
 - a) Did the events or omissions giving rise to the claim or claims, or a substantial part thereof, occur in Nassau or Suffolk County? Yes No
 - b) Did the events or omissions giving rise to the claim or claims, or a substantial part thereof, occur in the Eastern District? Yes No
 - c) If this is a Fair Debt Collection Practice Act case, specify the County in which the offending communication was received: _____.

If your answer to question 2 (b) is "No," does the defendant (or a majority of the defendants, if there is more than one) reside in Nassau or Suffolk County, or, in an interpleader action, does the claimant (or a majority of the claimants, if there is more than one) reside in Nassau or Suffolk County? Yes No
(Note: A corporation shall be considered a resident of the County in which it has the most significant contacts).

BAR ADMISSION

I am currently admitted in the Eastern District of New York and currently a member in good standing of the bar of this court.
 Yes No

Are you currently the subject of any disciplinary action (s) in this or any other state or federal court?
 Yes (If yes, please explain) No

I certify the accuracy of all information provided above.

Signature: _____

Print

Save As...

Reset

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: [Debt Collection Class Action Filed Against Miller & Milone, P.C.](#)
