Eastern District of Kentucky

AUG 2 8 2017

# UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF KENTUCKY LEXINGTON DIVISION

AT LEXINGTON ROBERT R. CARR CLERK U.S. DISTRICT COURT

JAMES CAMERON, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated,

Plaintiffs,

-against-

CREDIT SOLUTIONS, LLC and JOHN DOES 1-25,

Defendants.

Civil Case Number: 5:17-(N-358-JMH

#### **CIVIL ACTION**

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT AND DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Plaintiff JAMES CAMERON (hereinafter, "Plaintiff"), an Ohio resident, brings this class action complaint by and through his attorneys, Marcus & Zelman, LLC, against Defendant CREDIT SOLUTIONS, LLC. and JOHN DOES 1-25 (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

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 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.
- 3. 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 Ohio consumers seeking redress for Defendant's actions of using an unfair and unconscionable means to collect a 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 ("FDCPA") which prohibits debt collectors from engaging in false, deceptive or misleading practices.
- 8. Plaintiff is seeking damages, and declaratory and injunctive relief.

### **PARTIES**

- 9. Plaintiff is a natural person and a resident of the State of Ohio, and is a "Consumer" as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692(a)(3).
- Defendant Credit Solutions, LLC is a collection agency with its principal office located at
   Thunderstick Drive Suite 400 Lexington, Kentucky 40505.
- 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).
- 13. 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**

14. 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 Ohio b) who were sent a collection letter from the Defendant c) attempting to collect a consumer debt owed to or allegedly owed to Berger Health Partners, d) that states "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 within 30 days from 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 this office 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" (e) 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.

- 15. 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.
- 16. 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.
- 17. 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 1692g.
- 18. The Plaintiffs' claims are typical of the class members, as all are based upon the same facts and legal theories.
- 19. 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.
- 20. 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 1692g.
- (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) Adequacy: 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 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.

- 21. 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.
- 22. 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**

- 23. 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.
- 24. Some time prior to August 26, 2016, an obligation was allegedly incurred to BERGER HEALTH PARTNERS.
- 25. The BERGER HEALTH PARTNERS 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.
- 26. The alleged BERGER HEALTH PARTNERS obligation is a "debt" as defined by 15 U.S.C.§ 1692a(5).
- 27. BERGER HEALTH PARTNERS is a "creditor" as defined by 15 U.S.C.§ 1692a(4).

28. Defendant contends that the BERGER HEALTH PARTNERS debt is past due.

29. 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.

30. BERGER HEALTH PARTNERS directly or through an intermediary contracted the

Defendant to collect the alleged debt.

31. On or about August 26, 2016, the Defendant caused to be delivered to the Plaintiff a

collection letter in an attempt to collect the alleged BERGER HEALTH PARTNERS debt.

See Exhibit A.

32. Upon information and belief, the August 26, 2016 letter was the first communication

between the Defendant and Plaintiff regarding the BERGER HEALTH PARTNERS debt.

33. The August 26, 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).

34. Upon information and belief, the letter was sent from Lexington Kentucky.

35. The August 26, 2016 letter is a "communication" as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(2).

36. The Plaintiff received and read the Letter sometime after August 26, 2016.

37. The Letter stated in part:

"Amount Due: \$74.05"

38. The Letter further stated:

"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 within 30 days from 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 this office 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.

- 39. Absent from the above phrase was any mention that the dispute had to be in writing.
- 40. Pursuant to 15 U.S.C. §1692g(a)(4) a debt collector must within five days after the initial communication, send the consumer a written notice containing 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 a judgment against the consumer and a copy of such verification or judgement will be mailed to the consumer by the debt collector. (Emphasis added).
- 41. Courts have consistently held that omitting the words "in writing" on a validation notice is a violation of 1692g(a), as it does not effectively convey to the consumer his or her rights under the FDCPA. See *Mccabe v. Crawford & Company et al.*, 272 F. Supp 2d 736 (ND Illinois July 08, 2003) and *Bartlett v. Heibl*, 128 F.3d 497, 499 (7th Cir.1997) (stating that certain information required by the Act must be contained in the validation notice and that the information must not be conveyed in a confusing manner).
- 42. The Defendant's failure to notify the Plaintiff that any dispute must be in writing left her, as would leave any least sophisticated consumer, into believing she could dispute the debt over the phone, provided it was within the 30-day period.
- 43. Congress adopted the debt validation provisions of section 1692g to guarantee that consumers would receive adequate notice of their rights under the FDCPA. *Wilson*, 225

- F.3d at 354, citing Miller v. Payco-General Am. Credits, Inc., 943 F.2d 482, 484 (4th Cir.1991).
- 44. Congress further desired to "eliminate the recurring problem of debt collectors dunning the wrong person or attempting to collect debts which the consumer has already paid." S.Rep. No. 95–382, at 4 (1977), reprinted in 1977 U.S.C.C.A.N. 1695, 1699.
- 45. The rights afforded to consumers under Section 1692g are amongst the most powerful protections provided by the FDCPA.
- 46. Once a consumer makes proper timely notice of a dispute, the debt collector is required by law to cease collection of the account until verification of the debt is obtained.
- 47. However, in order to be afforded of that right, the dispute must be in writing.
- 48. In enacting the FDCPA, the Senate addressed collection abuses they observed, specifically from debt collectors who would obtain "information about a consumer through false pretense . . ." To end these abuses, Congress gave consumers the right to be informed that the entity contacting them is a debt collector. See 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(11).
- 49. By providing an inaccurate validation notice, the Defendant caused the Plaintiff real harm.

## COUNT I

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

- 50. 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.
- 51. Pursuant to 15 U.S.C. §1692e, a debt collector may not use any false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of any debt.
- 52. The Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. §1692e:

- a. By misleading the least sophisticated consumer to believe that he or she can make a legally effective dispute by calling the debt collector, when in fact it must be done in writing;
- b. By making a false representation or deceptive means to collect a debt in violation of 1692e(10).
- 53. 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 damages, costs and attorneys' fees.

#### COUNT II

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

- 54. 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.
- 55. Defendant's 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. § 1692g.
- 56. The Defendant violated said provision by failing to accurately convey the validation notice in violation of 1692g(a)(4) and 1692g(a)(5).
- 57. By reason thereof, Defendant is liable to Plaintiff for judgment that Defendant's conduct violated Section 1692g *et seq.* of the FDCPA, actual damages, statutory damages, costs and attorneys' fees.

### 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 Ari H. Marcus, Esq and Yitzchak Zelman, Esq., 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: August 28, 2017

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: yzelman@marcuszelman.com

Attorneys for Plaintiff

**DEMAND FOR TRIAL BY JURY** 

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

Dated: August 28, 2017

PRO HAC VICE APPLICATION TO BE FILED

s/Yitzchak Zelman, Esq.

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ICCSOL02 PO Box 1022 Wixom MI 48393-1022

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



(877)265-1485

August 26, 2016

Please mail all correspondence to: Credit Solutions of Kentucky, LLC PO Box 24710 Lexington KY 40524-4710

Account #: 2243 Amount Due: \$ 74.05

\*\*\*Please detach and return with your payment \*\*\*

ACCT 3823 CLIENT

BERGER HEALTH PARTNERS

DATE

TOTAL

04/15/16

74.05

Total Charges: \$ 74.05

Dear James R Cameron,

The above referenced account(s) have been placed with us by our client(s) in the amount of \$ 74.05 for collection.

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 within 30 days from 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 mall you a copy of such judgment or verification. If you request of this office 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.

This is an attempt to collect a debt and any information obtained will be used for that purpose. This communication is from a debt collector.

Sincerely,

Regina Collection Specialist (877)265-1485 Ext, 157

3ICCSOL0201





Visit us online at www.cs-llc.com from your PC or smartphone.



Monday - Tuesday: 8:00am EST to 7:00pm EST • Wednesday - Friday: 8:00am EST to 6:00pm EST Credit Solutions of Kentucky, LLC • 2277 Thunderstick Dr., Ste 400 • Lexington, KY 40505-9002 • (877)265-1485

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JS 44 (Rev. 06/17)

# **CIVIL COVER SHEET**

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				DEFENDANTS			
JAMES CAMERON, individually and on behalf of all others similar situated				CREDIT SOLUTIONS, LLC and JOHN DOES 1-25			
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Pickaway County, C			Ohio	County of Residence of First Listed Defendant Fayette County, Kentuck		Fayette County, Kentucky	
(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, and Telephone Numbe	er)		Attorneys (If Known)			
MÀRCUS & ZELMAN, LI Tel: 732.695.3282 Email	LC 1500 Allaire Ave S	uite 101 Ocean NJ	07712				
II. BASIS OF JURISDI	ICTION (Place on "X" in (	ne Box Only)	III. CI	TIZENSHIP OF P	RINCIPAL PARTIE	<b>S</b> (Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff	
				(For Diversity Cases Only)		and One Box for Defendant)	
U.S. Government Plaintiff	■ 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government)	(U.S. Government Not a Party)			TF DEF  ☐ I Incorporated or  of Business In		
2 U.S. Government Defendant	☐ 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizensh	Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)		en of Another State	2	d Principal Place ☐ 5 ☐ 5 n Another State	
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IV. NATURE OF SUIT (Place an "X" in One Box Only)				Click here for: Nature of Suit Code Descriptions.			
CONTRACT		DEDGONAL INVINCE		ORFEITURE/PENALTY	BANKRUPTCY	OTHER STATUTES	
☐ 110 Insurance ☐ 120 Marine	PERSONAL INJURY  310 Airplane	PERSONAL INJUR  365 Personal Injury -		5 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881	☐ 422 Appeal 28 USC 158 ☐ 423 Withdrawal	☐ 375 False Claims Act ☐ 376 Qui Tam (31 USC	
☐ 130 Miller Act	☐ 315 Airplane Product	Product Liability	,	0 Other	28 USC 157	3729(a))	
☐ 140 Negotiable Instrument ☐ 150 Recovery of Overpayment	Liability  320 Assault, Libel &	☐ 367 Health Care/ Pharmaceutical			PROPERTY RIGHTS	☐ 400 State Reapportionment ☐ 410 Antitrust	
& Enforcement of Judgment		Personal Injury			☐ 820 Copyrights	☐ 430 Banks and Banking	
151 Medicare Act     152 Recovery of Defaulted	☐ 330 Federal Employers'	Product Liability	,		830 Patent	450 Commerce	
☐ 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans	Liability  ☐ 340 Marine	☐ 368 Asbestos Persona Injury Product	¹		☐ 835 Patent - Abbreviated New Drug Application	<ul> <li>☐ 460 Deportation</li> <li>☐ 470 Racketeer Influenced and</li> </ul>	
(Excludes Veterans)	☐ 345 Marine Product	Liability			☐ 840 Trademark	Corrupt Organizations	
☐ 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits	Liability  ☐ 350 Motor Vehicle	PERSONAL PROPER  370 Other Fraud		LABOR 0 Fair Labor Standards	SOCIAL SECURITY  861 HIA (1395ff)	■ 480 Consumer Credit □ 490 Cable/Sat TV	
☐ 160 Stockholders' Suits	355 Motor Vehicle	370 Other Fraud 371 Truth in Lending		Act	☐ 862 Black Lung (923)	850 Securities/Commodities/	
☐ 190 Other Contract	Product Liability	380 Other Personal	□ 72	0 Labor/Management	☐ 863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g)		
<ul> <li>☐ 195 Contract Product Liability</li> <li>☐ 196 Franchise</li> </ul>	360 Other Personal Injury	Property Damage  ☐ 385 Property Damage		Relations 0 Railway Labor Act	☐ 864 SSID Title XVI ☐ 865 RSI (405(g))	☐ 890 Other Statutory Actions ☐ 891 Agricultural Acts	
- 170 Transmise	☐ 362 Personal Injury -	Product Liability		1 Family and Medical	3 003 KSI (403(g))	☐ 893 Environmental Matters	
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220 Foreclosure	☐ 441 Voting	☐ 463 Alien Detainee		Income Security Act	or Defendant)	☐ 899 Administrative Procedure	
☐ 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment	☐ 442 Employment	510 Motions to Vacate	e		■ 871 IRS—Third Party	Act/Review or Appeal of	
<ul> <li>240 Torts to Land</li> <li>245 Tort Product Liability</li> </ul>	☐ 443 Housing/ Accommodations	Sentence  530 General			26 USC 7609	Agency Decision  950 Constitutionality of	
290 All Other Real Property	☐ 445 Amer. w/Disabilities -			IMMIGRATION		State Statutes	
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		560 Civil Detainee - Conditions of					
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Defendant violated the FDCPA  VII. REQUESTED IN   ☐ CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION			n D	DEMAND \$ CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint:			
COMPLAINT: UNDER RULE 23, F.R.Cv.P.				JURY DEMAND: X Yes \( \text{No} \) No			
VIII. RELATED CASE IF ANY	(See instructions):	JUDGE			DOCKET NUMBER		
DATE		SIGNATURE OF AT	TORNEY (	OF RECORD			
08/28/2017	s/Yitzchak Zelman						
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY							
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Court Name: U S DISTRICT COURT EDKY Division: 5 Receipt Number: 130644 Cashier ID: lcapezzu Transaction Date: 08/29/2017 Payer Name: Pamela G. Meadows

CIVIL FILING FEE
For: Pamela G. Meadows
Case/Party: D-KYE-5-17-CV-000358-001
Amount: \$400.00

CREDIT CARD

Amt Tendered: \$400.00

Total Due: \$400.00 Total Tendered: \$400.00 Change Amt: \$0.00

# **ClassAction.org**

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: <u>Credit Solutions Faces FDCPA Lawsuit Over Letter's Alleged Nondisclosure</u>