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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

MARY CONNER, Individually and as the representative of a class of similarly situated persons,

Case No. 17-cv- 5607

Plaintiff,

- against -

LULU FROST, INC.,

Defendants.

COMPLAINT - CLASS ACTION

INTRODUCTION

- 1. Plaintiff, Mary Conner ("<u>Plaintiff</u>" or "<u>Conner</u>"), brings this action on behalf of himself and all other persons similarly situated against Lulu Frost, Inc. (hereinafter "<u>Lulu Frost</u>" or "<u>Defendant</u>"), and states as follows:
- 2. Plaintiff is a visually-impaired and legally blind person who requires screen-reading software to read website content using his computer. Plaintiff uses the terms "blind" or "visually-impaired" to refer to all people with visual impairments who meet the legal definition of blindness in that they have a visual acuity with correction of less than or equal to 20 x 200. Some blind people who meet this definition have limited vision; others have no vision.

- 3. Based on a 2010 U.S. Census Bureau report, approximately 8.1 million people in the United States are visually impaired, including 2.0 million who are blind, and according to the American Foundation for the Blind's 2015 report, approximately 400,000 visually impaired persons live in the State of New York.
- 4. Plaintiff brings this civil rights action against Lulu Frost for their failure to design, construct, maintain, and operate their website to be fully accessible to and independently usable by Plaintiff and other blind or visually-impaired persons. Defendant is denying blind and visually-impaired persons throughout the United States with equal access to the goods and services Lulu Frost provides to their non-disabled customers through http://www.lulufrost.com (hereinafter "lulufrost.com" or "the website"). Defendants' denial of full and equal access to its website, and therefore denial of its products and services offered, and in conjunction with its physical locations, is a violation of Plaintiff's rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (the "ADA").
- 5. Lulufrost.com provides to the public a wide array of the goods, services, price specials, employment opportunities and other programs offered by Lulu Frost. Yet, lulufrost.com contains thousands of access barriers that make it difficult if not impossible for blind and visually-impaired customers to use the website. In fact, the access barriers make it impossible for blind and visually-impaired users to even complete a transaction on the website. Thus, Lulu Frost excludes the blind and visually-impaired from the full and equal participation in the growing Internet economy that is increasingly a fundamental part of the common marketplace and daily living. In the wave of technological advances in recent years, assistive computer technology is becoming an increasingly prominent part of everyday life, allowing blind and visually-impaired persons to fully and independently access a variety of services.
- 6. The blind have an even greater need than the sighted to shop and conduct transactions online due to the challenges faced in mobility. The lack of an accessible website

means that blind people are excluded from experiencing transacting with defendant's website and from purchasing goods or services from defendant's website.

- 7. Despite readily available accessible technology, such as the technology in use at other heavily trafficked retail websites, which makes use of alternative text, accessible forms, descriptive links, resizable text and limits the usage of tables and JavaScript, Defendant has chosen to rely on an exclusively visual interface. Lulu Frost's sighted customers can independently browse, select, and buy online without the assistance of others. However, blind persons must rely on sighted companions to assist them in accessing and purchasing on lulufrost.com.
- 8. By failing to make the website accessible to blind persons, Defendant is violating basic equal access requirements under both state and federal law.
- 9. Congress provided a clear and national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities when it enacted the ADA. Such discrimination includes barriers to full integration, independent living, and equal opportunity for persons with disabilities, including those barriers created by websites and other public accommodations that are inaccessible to blind and visually impaired persons. Similarly, New York state law requires placed of public accommodation to ensure access to goods, services, and facilities by making reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.
- 10. Plaintiff browsed and intended to make an online purchase of a pair of earrings on lulufrost.com. However, unless Defendant remedies the numerous access barriers on its website, Plaintiff and Class members will continue to be unable to independently navigate, browse, use, and complete a transaction on lulufrost.com.
- 11. Because Defendant's website, lulufrost.com, is not equally accessible to blind and visually-impaired consumers, it violates the ADA. Plaintiff seeks a permanent injunction to cause a change in Lulu Frost's policies, practices, and procedures to that Defendant's website will

become and remain accessible to blind and visually-impaired consumers. This complaint also seeks compensatory damages to compensate Class members for having been subjected to unlawful discrimination.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 12. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this action under 28 U.S.C. § 1331 and 42 U.S.C. § 12181, as Plaintiff's claims arise under Title III of the ADA, 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.*, and 28 U.S.C. § 1332, because this is a class action, as defined by 28 U.S.C. § 1332(d)(1)(B), in which a member of the putative class is a citizen of a different state than Defendant, and the amount in controversy exceeds the sum or value of \$5,000,000, excluding interest and costs. See 28 U.S.C. § 133(d)(2).
- 13. This Court also has supplemental jurisdiction over pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367, over Plaintiff's pendent claims under the New York State Human Rights Law, N.Y. Exec. Law, Article 15 (Executive Law § 290 et seq.) and the New York City Human Rights Law, N.Y.C. Administrative Code § 8-101 et seq. ("City Law").
- 14. Venue is proper in this District of New York pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1391(b)-(c) and 144(a) because Plaintiff resides in this District, Defendant conducts and continues to conduct a substantial and significant amount of business in this District, and a substantial portion of the conduct complained of herein occurred in this District.
- 15. Defendant is registered to do business in New York State and has been conducting business in New York State, including in this District. Defendant maintains Brick-and-mortar places of accommodation in this District which are subject to personal jurisdiction in this District. Defendant also has been and is committing the acts alleged herein in this District and has been and is violating the rights of consumers in this District and has been and is causing injury to consumers in this District. A substantial part of the act and omissions giving rise to Plaintiff's

claims have occurred in this District. Specifically, Plaintiff attempted to purchase a pair of earrings on Defendant's website, Lulufrost.com.

PARTIES

- 16. Plaintiff, is and has been at all relevant times a resident of Queens County, State of New York.
- 17. Plaintiff is legally blind and a member of a protected class under the ADA, 42 U.S.C. § 12102(l)-(2), the regulations implementing the ADA set forth at 28 CFR §§ 36.101 et seq., the New York State Human Rights Law and the New York City Human Rights Law. Plaintiff, Mary Conner, cannot use a computer without the assistance of screen reader software. Plaintiff, Mary Conner, has been denied the full enjoyment of the facilities, goods and services of lulufrost.com, as well as to the facilities, goods and services of Defendant's brick and mortar locations, as a result of accessibility barriers on lulufrost.com.
- 18. Defendant, Lulu Frost, Inc., is a New York Domestic Business Corporation with its principal place of business located at 12 East 20th Street, New York, NY 10003.
- 19. Defendant owns and operates Lulu Frost Stores (hereinafter, "<u>Lulu Frost</u>

 <u>Stores</u>" or "<u>Stores</u>"), which is a place of public accommodation. Lulu Frost Stores are located in New York State.
- 20. Lulu Frost Stores provide to the public important and enjoyable goods and services such as jewelry and accessories and original lines of jewelry not available anywhere else. Defendant also provides to the public a website known as lulufrost.com which provides consumers with access to an array of goods and services offered to the public by the Lulu Frost Stores, including, the ability to view the various lines of jewelry and accessories, make purchases, learn about promotions, and learn about Lulu Frost Stores and information about the

Stores locations, times of operation, and about the designer, among other features. The inaccessibility of lulufrost.com has deterred Plaintiff from buying a pair of earrings.

21. Defendant's locations are public accommodations within the definition of Title III of the ADA, 42 U.S.C. § 12181(7). Defendant's website is a service, privilege, or advantage that is heavily integrated with Defendant's physical stores and operates as a gateway thereto.

NATURE OF THE CASE

- 22. The Internet has become a significant source of information, a portal, and a tool for conducting business, doing everyday activities such as shopping, learning, banking, researching, as well as many other activities for sighted, blind and visually-impaired persons alike.
- 23. The blind access websites by using keyboards in conjunction with screen-reading software which vocalizes visual information on a computer screen. Except for a blind person whose residual vision is still sufficient to use magnification, screen access software provides the only method by which a blind person can independently access the Internet. Unless websites are designed to allow for use in this manner, blind persons are unable to fully access Internet websites and the information, products and services contained therein.
- 24. For screen-reading software to function, the information on a website must be capable of being rendered into text. If the website content is not capable of being rendered into text, the blind user is unable to access the same content available to sighted users.
- 25. Blind users of Windows operating system-enabled computers and devises have several screen-reading software programs available to them. Job Access With Speech, otherwise known as "JAWS" is currently the most popular, separately purchase and downloaded screen-reading software program available for blind computer users.

26. The international website standards organization, the World Wide Web Consortium, known throughout the world as W3C, has published version 2.0 of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines ("WCAG 2.0"). WCAG 2.0 are well-established guidelines for making websites accessible to blind and visually-impaired persons. These guidelines are universally followed by most large business entities and government agencies to ensure their websites are accessible. Many Courts have also established WCAG 2.0 as the standard guideline for accessibility. The federal government has also promulgated website accessibility standards under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. These guidelines are readily available via the Internet, so that a business designing a website can easily access them. These guidelines recommend several basic components for making websites accessible, including but not limited to: adding invisible alt-text to graphics, ensuring that all functions can be performed using a keyboard and not just a mouse, ensuring that image maps are accessible, and adding headings so that blind persons can easily navigate the site. Without these very basic components, a website will be inaccessible to a blind person using a screen reader.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

- 27. Defendant, Lulu Frost, operates Lulu Frost Stores in New York State and provides jewelry, accessories, gift cards, and original lines of jewelry only available at Lulu Frost.
- 28. Lulufrost.com is a service and benefit offered by Lulu Frost in New York State and throughout the United States. Lulufrost.com is owned, controlled and/or operated by Lulu Frost.
- 29. Lulufrost.com is a commercial website that offers products and services for online sale that are available in the Lulu Frost Stores. The online store allows the user to browse jewelry and accessory items, make purchases, learn about the designer and original lines of jewelry and accessories, and perform a variety of other functions.

- 30. Among the features offered by lulufrost.com are the following:
- (a) learning about store information including, allowing persons who wish to visit Lulu Frost Stores to learn their location, hours of operation, and phone numbers;
- (b) an online store, allowing customers to purchase jewelry and accessories, including original lines of jewelry and accessories not available elsewhere; and
 - (c) learning about the designer, career opportunities, and press coverage.
- 31. This case arises out of Lulu Frost's policy and practice of denying the blind access to lulufrost.com, including the goods and services offered by Lulu Frost Stores through lulufrost.com. Due to Lulu Frost's failure and refusal to remove access barriers to lulufrost.com, blind individuals have been and are being denied equal access to Lulu Frost Stores, as well as to the numerous goods, services and benefits offered to the public through lulufrost.com.
- 32. Lulu Frost denies the blind access to goods, services and information made available through lulufrost.com by preventing them from freely navigating lulufrost.com.
- 33. Lulufrost.com contains access barriers that prevent free and full use by Plaintiff and blind persons using keyboards and screen-reading software. These barriers are pervasive and include, but are not limited to: lack of alt-text on graphics, inaccessible drop-down menus, the lack of navigation links, the lack of adequate prompting and labeling, the denial of keyboard access, empty links that contain no text, redundant links where adjacent links go to the same URL address, and the requirement that transactions be performed solely with a mouse.
- 34. Alternative text ("Alt-text") is invisible code embedded beneath a graphical image on a website. Web accessibility requires that alt-text be coded with each picture so that a screen-reader can speak the alternative text while sighted users see the picture. Alt-text does not change the visual presentation except that it appears as a text pop-up when the mouse moves over the picture. There are many important pictures on lulufrost.com that lack a text equivalent. The

lack of alt-text on these graphics prevents screen readers from accurately vocalizing a description of the graphics (screen-readers detect and vocalize alt-text to provide a description of the image to a blind computer user). As a result, Plaintiff and blind lulufrost.com customers are unable to determine what is on the website, browse the website or investigate Lulu Frost Stores' web pages and/or make purchases.

- 35. Lulufrost.com also lacks prompting information and accommodations necessary to allow blind shoppers who use screen-readers to locate and accurately fill-out online forms. On a shopping site such as lulufrost.com, these forms include search fields to locate earrings, fields that specify the number of items desired, and fields used to fill-out personal information, including address and credit card information. Due to lack of adequate labeling, Plaintiff and blind customers cannot make purchases or inquiries as to Defendant's merchandise and locations, nor can they enter their personal identification and financial information with confidence and security.
- 36. Similarly, lulufrost.com lacks accessible drop-down menus. Drop-down menus allow customers to locate and choose products as well as specify the quantity of certain items. On lulufrost.com, blind customers are not aware if the desired products, such as a pair of earrings, have been added to the shopping cart because the screen-reader does not indicate the type of product or quantity. Therefore, blind customers are essentially prevented from purchasing any items on lulufrost.com.
- 37. Furthermore, lulufrost.com lacks accessible image maps. An image map is a function that combines multiple words and links into one single image. Visual details on this single image highlight different "hot spots" which, when clicked on, allow the user to jump to many different destinations within the website. For an image map to be accessible, it must contain alt-text for the various "hot spots." The image maps on lulufrost.com's menu page do

not contain adequate alt-text and are therefore inaccessible to Plaintiff and the other blind individuals attempting to make a purchase. When Plaintiff tried to access the menu link in order to make a purchase, she was unable to access it completely.

- 38. Lulufrost.com also lacks accessible forms. Quantity boxes allow customers to specify the quantity of certain items. On lulufrost.com, blind customers are unable to select specific quantity because the screen-reader does not indicate the function of the box. As a result, blind customers are denied access to the quantity box. Furthermore, Plaintiff is unable to locate the shopping cart because the shopping basket form does not specify the purpose of the shopping cart. As a result, blind customers are denied access to the shopping cart. Consequently, blind customers are unsuccessful in adding products into their shopping carts and are essentially prevented from purchasing items on lulufrost.com.
- 39. Moreover, the lack of navigation links on Defendant's website makes attempting to navigate through Lulufrost.com even more time consuming and confusing for Plaintiff and blind consumers.
- 40. Lulufrost.com requires the use of a mouse to complete a transaction. Yet, it is a fundamental tenet of web accessibility that for a web page to be accessible to Plaintiff and blind people, it must be possible for the user to interact with the page using only the keyboard. Indeed, Plaintiff and blind users cannot use a mouse because manipulating the mouse is a visual activity of moving the mouse pointer from one visual spot on the page to another. Thus, lulufrost.com's inaccessible design, which requires the use of a mouse to complete a transaction, denies Plaintiff and blind customers the ability to independently navigate and/or make purchases on Lulufrost.com.
- 41. Due to lulufrost.com's inaccessibility, Plaintiff and blind customers must in turn spend time, energy, and/or money to make their purchases at a Lulu Frost Stores. Some

blind customers may require a driver to get to the Stores or require assistance in navigating the Stores. By contrast, if lulufrost.com was accessible, a blind person could independently investigate products and programs and make purchases and reservations via the Internet as sighted individuals can and do. According to WCAG 2.0 Guideline 2.4.1, a mechanism is necessary to bypass blocks of content that are repeated on multiple webpages because requiring users to extensively tab before reaching the main content is an unacceptable barrier to accessing the website. Plaintiff must tab through every navigation bar option and footer on Defendant's website in an attempt to reach the desired service. Thus, lulufrost.com's inaccessible design, which requires the use of a mouse to complete a transaction, denies Plaintiff and blind customers the ability to independently make purchases on lulufrost.com.

- 42. Lulufrost.com thus contains access barriers which deny the full and equal access to Plaintiff, who would otherwise use lulufrost.com and who would otherwise be able to fully and equally enjoy the benefits and services of Lulu Frost Stores in New York State and throughout the United States.
- 43. Plaintiff, Mary Conner, has made numerous attempts to complete a purchase on lulufrost.com, most recently in August, 2017, but was unable to do so independently because of the many access barriers on Defendant's website. These access barriers have caused lulufrost.com to be inaccessible to, and not independently usable by, blind and visually-impaired persons. Amongst other access barriers experienced, Plaintiff was unable to purchase a pair of earrings.
- 44. As described above, Plaintiff has actual knowledge of the fact that Defendant's website, lulufrost.com, contains access barriers causing the website to be inaccessible, and not independently usable by, blind and visually-impaired persons.

- 45. These barriers to access have denied Plaintiff full and equal access to, and enjoyment of, the goods, benefits and services of lulufrost.com and the Lulu Frost Stores.
- 46. Defendant engaged in acts of intentional discrimination, including but not limited to the following policies or practices:
- (a) constructed and maintained a website that is inaccessible to blind class members with knowledge of the discrimination; and/or
- (b) constructed and maintained a website that is sufficiently intuitive and/or obvious that is inaccessible to blind class members; and/or
- (c) failed to take actions to correct these access barriers in the face of substantial harm and discrimination to blind class members.
- 47. Defendant utilizes standards, criteria or methods of administration that have the effect of discriminating or perpetuating the discrimination of others.

CLASS ACTION ALLEGATIONS

- 48. Plaintiff, on behalf of himself and all others similarly situated, seeks certification of the following nationwide class pursuant to Rule 23(a) and 23(b)(2) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure: "all legally blind individuals in the United States who have attempted to access Lulufrost.com and as a result have been denied access to the enjoyment of goods and services offered in the Lulu Frost Stores, during the relevant statutory period."
- 49. Plaintiff seeks certification of the following New York subclass pursuant to Fed.R.Civ.P. 23(a), 23(b)(2), and, alternatively, 23(b)(3): "all legally blind individuals in New York State who have attempted to access lulufrost.com and as a result have been denied access to the enjoyment of goods and services offered in the Lulu Frost Stores, during the relevant statutory period."

- 50. There are hundreds of thousands of visually-impaired persons in New York State. There are approximately 8.1 million people in the United States who are visually-impaired. *Id.* Thus, the persons in the class are so numerous that joinder of all such persons is impractical and the disposition of their claims in a class action is a benefit to the parties and to the Court.
- 51. This case arises out of Defendant's policy and practice of maintaining an inaccessible website denying blind persons access to the goods and services of lulufrost.com and the Lulu Frost Stores. Due to Defendant's policy and practice of failing to remove access barriers, blind persons have been and are being denied full and equal access to independently browse, select and shop on lulufrost.com and by extension the goods and services offered through Defendant's website to Lulu Frost Stores.
- 52. There are common questions of law and fact common to the class, including without limitation, the following:
 - (a) Whether lulufrost.com is a "public accommodation" under the ADA;
- (b) Whether lulufrost.com is a "place or provider of public accommodation" under the laws of New York;
- (c) Whether Defendant, through its website, lulufrost.com, denies the full and equal enjoyment of its goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations to people with visual disabilities in violation of the ADA; and
- (d) Whether Defendant, through its website, lulufrost.com, denies the full and equal enjoyment of its goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations to people with visual disabilities in violation of the law of New York.
- 53. The claims of the named Plaintiff are typical of those of the class. The class, similar to the Plaintiff, is severely visually-impaired or otherwise blind, and claims Lulu Frost

has violated the ADA, and/or the laws of New York by failing to update or remove access barriers on their website, lulufrost.com, so it can be independently accessible to the class of people who are legally blind.

- 54. Plaintiff will fairly and adequately represent and protect the interests of the members of the Class because Plaintiff has retained and is represented by counsel competent and experienced in complex class action litigation, and because Plaintiff has no interests antagonistic to the members of the class. Class certification of the claims is appropriate pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(b)(2) because Defendant has acted or refused to act on grounds generally applicable to the Class, making appropriate both declaratory and injunctive relief with respect to Plaintiff and the Class as a whole.
- 55. Alternatively, class certification is appropriate under Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(b)(3) because questions of law and fact common to Class members clearly predominate over questions affecting only individual class members, and because a class action is superior to other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of this litigation.
- 56. Judicial economy will be served by maintenance of this lawsuit as a class action in that it is likely to avoid the burden that would be otherwise placed upon the judicial system by the filing of numerous similar suits by people with visual disabilities throughout the United States.
- 57. References to Plaintiff shall be deemed to include the named Plaintiff and each member of the class, unless otherwise indicated.

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

(Violation of 42 U.S.C. §§ 12181 et seq. – Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act)

58. Plaintiff repeats, realleges and incorporates by reference the allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 57 of this Complaint as though set forth at length herein.

- 59. Title III of the American with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. § 12182(a) provides that "No individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation by any person who owns, leases (or leases to), or operates a place of public accommodation." Title III also prohibits an entity from "[u]tilizing standards or criteria or methods of administration that have the effect of discriminating on the basis of disability." 42 U.S.C. § 12181(b)(2)(D)(I).
- 60. The Lulu Frost Stores located in New York State are a sales establishment and public accommodation within the definition of 42 U.S.C. §§ 12181(7)(E). lulufrost.com is a service, privilege or advantage of Lulu Frost Stores. Lulufrost.com is a service that is by and integrated with the Stores.
- 61. Defendant is subject to Title III of the ADA because it owns and operates the Lulu Frost Stores.
- 62. Under Title III of the ADA, 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(1)(A)(I), it is unlawful discrimination to deny individuals with disabilities or a class of individuals with disabilities the opportunity to participate in or benefit from the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of an entity.
- 63. Under Title III of the ADA, 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(1)(A)(II), it is unlawful discrimination to deny individuals with disabilities or a class of individuals with disabilities an opportunity to participate in or benefit from the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodation, which is equal to the opportunities afforded to other individuals.
- 64. Specifically, under Title III of the ADA, 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(II), unlawful discrimination includes, among other things, "a failure to make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures, when such modifications are necessary to

afford such goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations to individuals with disabilities, unless the entity can demonstrate that making such modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of such goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages or accommodations."

- 65. In addition, under Title III of the ADA, 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(III), unlawful discrimination also includes, among other things, "a failure to take such steps as may be necessary to ensure that no individual with disability is excluded, denied services, segregated or otherwise treated differently than other individuals because of the absence of auxiliary aids and services, unless the entity can demonstrate that taking such steps would fundamentally alter the nature of the good, service, facility, privilege, advantage, or accommodation being offered or would result in an undue burden."
- 66. There are readily available, well-established guidelines on the Internet for making websites accessible to the blind and visually-impaired. These guidelines have been followed by other business entities in making their websites accessible, including but not limited to ensuring adequate prompting and accessible alt-text. Incorporating the basic components to make their website accessible would neither fundamentally alter the nature of Defendant's business nor result in an undue burden to Defendant.
- 67. The acts alleged herein constitute violations of Title III of the ADA, 42 U.S.C. § 12101 *et seq.*, and the regulations promulgated thereunder. Patrons of Lulu Frost Stores who are blind have been denied full and equal access to lulufrost.com, have not been provided services that are provided to other patrons who are not disabled, and/or have been provided services that are inferior to the services provided to non-disabled patrons.
- 68. Defendant has failed to take any prompt and equitable steps to remedy its discriminatory conduct. These violations are ongoing.

- 69. As such, Defendant discriminates, and will continue in the future to discriminate against Plaintiff and members of the proposed class and subclass on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, accommodations and/or opportunities of lulufrost.com and Lulu Frost Stores in violation of Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 12181 *et seq.* and/or its implementing regulations.
- 70. Unless the Court enjoins Defendant from continuing to engage in these unlawful practices, Plaintiff and members of the proposed class and subclass will continue to suffer irreparable harm.
- 71. The actions of Defendant were and are in violation of the ADA, and therefore Plaintiff invokes his statutory right to injunctive relief to remedy the discrimination.
 - 72. Plaintiff is also entitled to reasonable attorneys' fees and costs.
- 73. Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12188 and the remedies, procedures, and rights set forth and incorporated therein, Plaintiff prays for judgment as set forth below.

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

(Violation of New York State Human Rights Law, N.Y. Exec. Law Article 15 (Executive Law § 292 et seq.))

- 74. Plaintiff repeats, realleges and incorporates by reference the allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 73 of this Complaint as though set forth at length herein.
- 75. N.Y. Exec. Law § 296(2)(a) provides that it is "an unlawful discriminatory practice for any person, being the owner, lessee, proprietor, manager, superintendent, agent, or employee of any place of public accommodation . . . because of the . . . disability of any person, directly or indirectly, to refuse, withhold from or deny to such person any of the accommodations, advantages, facilities or privileges thereof.".

76. The Lulu Frost Stores located in New York State are a sales establishment and public accommodation within the definition of N.Y. Exec. Law § 292(9). Lulufrost.com is a service, privilege or advantage of Lulu Frost Stores. Lulufrost.com is a service that is by and integrated with the Stores.

77. Defendant is subject to the New York Human Rights Law because it owns and operates the Lulu Frost Stores and lulufrost.com. Defendant is a person within the meaning of N.Y. Exec. Law. § 292(1).

78. Defendant is violating N.Y. Exec. Law § 296(2)(a) in refusing to update or remove access barriers to lulufrost.com, causing lulufrost.com and the services integrated with Lulu Frost Stores to be completely inaccessible to the blind. This inaccessibility denies blind patrons the full and equal access to the facilities, goods and services that Defendant makes available to the non-disabled public.

79. Specifically, under N.Y. Exec. Law § unlawful discriminatory practice includes, among other things, "a refusal to make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures, when such modifications are necessary to afford facilities, privileges, advantages or accommodations to individuals with disabilities, unless such person can demonstrate that making such modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of such facilities, privileges, advantages or accommodations."

80. In addition, under N.Y. Exec. Law § 296(2)(c)(II), unlawful discriminatory practice also includes, "a refusal to take such steps as may be necessary to ensure that no individual with a disability is excluded or denied services because of the absence of auxiliary aids and services, unless such person can demonstrate that taking such steps would fundamentally alter the nature of the facility, privilege, advantage or accommodation being offered or would result in an undue burden."

- 81. There are readily available, well-established guidelines on the Internet for making websites accessible to the blind and visually-impaired. These guidelines have been followed by other business entities in making their website accessible, including but not limited to: adding alt-text to graphics and ensuring that all functions can be performed by using a keyboard. Incorporating the basic components to make their website accessible would neither fundamentally alter the nature of Defendant's business nor result in an undue burden to Defendant.
- 82. Defendant's actions constitute willful intentional discrimination against the class on the basis of a disability in violation of the New York State Human Rights Law, N.Y. Exec. Law § 296(2) in that Defendant has:
- (a) constructed and maintained a website that is inaccessible to blind class members with knowledge of the discrimination; and/or
- (b) constructed and maintained a website that is sufficiently intuitive and/or obvious that is inaccessible to blind class members; and/or
- (c) failed to take actions to correct these access barriers in the face of substantial harm and discrimination to blind class members.
- 83. Defendant has failed to take any prompt and equitable steps to remedy their discriminatory conduct. These violations are ongoing.
- 84. As such, Defendant discriminates, and will continue in the future to discriminate against Plaintiff and members of the proposed class and subclass on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, accommodations and/or opportunities of lulufrost.com and Lulu Frost Stores under N.Y. Exec. Law § 296(2) et seq. and/or its implementing regulations. Unless the Court enjoins Defendant

from continuing to engage in these unlawful practices, Plaintiff and members of the class will continue to suffer irreparable harm.

- 85. The actions of Defendant were and are in violation of the New York State
 Human Rights Law and therefore Plaintiff invokes his right to injunctive relief to remedy the discrimination.
- 86. Plaintiff is also entitled to compensatory damages, as well as civil penalties and fines pursuant to N.Y. Exec. Law § 297(4)(c) et seq. for each and every offense.
 - 87. Plaintiff is also entitled to reasonable attorneys' fees and costs.
- 88. Pursuant to N.Y. Exec. Law § 297 and the remedies, procedures, and rights set forth and incorporated therein, Plaintiff prays for judgment as set forth below.

THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION

(Violation of New York State Civil Rights Law, NY CLS Civ R, Article 4 (CLS Civ R § 40 et seq.))

- 89. Plaintiff repeats, realleges and incorporates by reference the allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 88 of this Complaint as though set forth at length herein.
- 90. Plaintiff served notice thereof upon the attorney general as required by N.Y. Civil Rights Law § 41.
- 91. N.Y. Civil Rights Law § 40 provides that "all persons within the jurisdiction of this state shall be entitled to the full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of any places of public accommodations, resort or amusement, subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law and applicable alike to all persons. No persons, being the owner, lessee, proprietor, manager, superintendent, agent, or employee of any such place shall directly or indirectly refuse, withhold from, or deny to any person any of the accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges thereof . . ."

- 92. N.Y. Civil Rights Law § 40-c(2) provides that "no person because of . . . disability, as such term is defined in section two hundred ninety-two of executive law, be subjected to any discrimination in his or her civil rights, or to any harassment, as defined in section 240.25 of the penal law, in the exercise thereof, by any other person or by any firm, corporation or institution, or by the state or any agency or subdivision."
- 93. The Lulu Frost Stores located in New York State are a sales establishment and public accommodation within the definition of N.Y. Civil Rights Law § 40-c(2). Lulufrost.com is a service, privilege or advantage of the Lulu Frost Stores. Lulufrost.com is a service that is by and integrated with the Stores.
- 94. Defendant is subject to New York Civil Rights Law because it owns and operates Lulu Frost Stores and lulufrost.com. Defendant is a person within the meaning of N.Y. Civil Law § 40-c(2).
- 95. Defendant is violating N.Y. Civil Rights Law § 40-c(2) in refusing to update or remove access barriers to lulufrost.com, causing lulufrost.com and the services integrated with the Lulu Frost Stores to be completely inaccessible to the blind. This inaccessibility denies blind patrons full and equal access to the facilities, goods and services that Defendant makes available to the non-disabled public.
- 96. There are readily available, well-established guidelines on the Internet for making websites accessible to the blind and visually-impaired. These guidelines have been followed by other business entities in making their website accessible, including but not limited to: adding alt-text to graphics and ensuring that all functions can be performed by using a keyboard. Incorporating the basic components to make their website accessible would neither fundamentally alter the nature of Defendant's business nor result in an undue burden to Defendant.

- 97. In addition, N.Y. Civil Rights Law § 41 states that "any corporation which shall violate any of the provisions of sections forty, forty-a, forty-b or forty two . . . shall for each and every violation thereof be liable to a penalty of not less than one hundred dollars nor more than five hundred dollars, to be recovered by the person aggrieved thereby . . ."
- 98. Specifically, under N.Y. Civil Rights Law § 40-d, "any person who shall violate any of the provisions of the foregoing section, or subdivision three of section 240.30 or section 240.31 of the penal law, or who shall aid or incite the violation of any of said provisions shall for each and every violation thereof be liable to a penalty of not less than one hundred dollars nor more than five hundred dollars, to be recovered by the person aggrieved thereby in any court of competent jurisdiction in the county in which the defendant shall reside . . ."
- 99. Defendant has failed to take any prompt and equitable steps to remedy their discriminatory conduct. These violations are ongoing.
- 100. As such, Defendant discriminates, and will continue in the future to discriminate against Plaintiff and members of the proposed class on the basis of disability are being directly indirectly refused, withheld from, or denied the accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges thereof in § 40 *et seq.* and/or its implementing regulations.
- 101. Plaintiff is entitled to compensatory damages of five hundred dollars per instance, as well as civil penalties and fines pursuant to N.Y. Civil Rights Law § 40 *et seq*. for each and every offense.

FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION

(Violation of New York City Human Rights Law, N.Y.C. Administrative Code § 8-102, *et seq.*)

102. Plaintiff repeats, realleges and incorporates by reference the allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 101 of this Complaint as though set forth at length herein.

103. N.Y.C. Administrative Code § 8-107(4)(a) provides that "it shall be an unlawful discriminatory practice for any person, being the owner, lessee, proprietor, manager, superintendent, agent or employee of any place or provider of public accommodation, because of . . . disability . . . directly or indirectly, to refuse, withhold from or deny to such person, any of the accommodations, advantages, facilities or privileges thereof."

104. Lulu Frost Stores located in New York State are a sales establishment and public accommodation within the definition of N.Y.C. Administrative Code § 8-102(9). Lulufrost.com is a service, privilege or advantage of the Lulu Frost Stores. Lulufrost.com is a service that is by and integrated with the Stores.

105. Defendant is subject to City Law because it owns and operates the Lulu Frost Stores and lulufrost.com. Defendant is a person within the meaning of N.Y.C. Administrative Code § 8-102(1).

106. Defendant is violating N.Y.C. Administrative Code § 8-107(4)(a) in refusing to update or remove access barriers to lulufrost.com, causing lulufrost.com and the services integrated with the Lulu Frost Stores to be completely inaccessible to the blind. This inaccessibility denies blind patrons full and equal access to the facilities, goods, and services that Defendant makes available to the non-disabled public. Specifically, Defendant is required to "make reasonable accommodation to the needs of persons with disabilities . . . any person prohibited by the provisions of [§ 8-107 et seq.] from discriminating on the basis of disability shall make reasonable accommodation to enable a person with a disability to . . . enjoy the right or rights in question provided that the disability is known or should have been known by the covered entity." N.Y.C. Administrative Code § 8-107(15)(a).

- 107. Defendant's actions constitute willful intentional discrimination against the class on the basis of a disability in violation of the N.Y.C. Administrative Code § 8-107(4)(a) and § 8-107(15)(a) in that Defendant has:
- (a) constructed and maintained a website that is inaccessible to blind class members with knowledge of the discrimination; and/or
- (b) constructed and maintained a website that is sufficiently intuitive and/or obvious that is inaccessible to blind class members; and/or
- (c) failed to take actions to correct these access barriers in the face of substantial harm and discrimination to blind class members.
- 108. Defendant has failed to take any prompt and equitable steps to remedy their discriminatory conduct. These violations are ongoing.
- 109. As such, Defendant discriminates, and will continue in the future to discriminate against Plaintiff and members of the proposed class and subclass on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, accommodations and/or opportunities of lulufrost.com and the Lulu Frost Stores under N.Y.C. Administrative Code § 8-107(4)(a) and/or its implementing regulations. Unless the Court enjoins Defendant from continuing to engage in these unlawful practices, Plaintiff and members of the class will continue to suffer irreparable harm.
- 110. The actions of Defendant were and are in violation of City law and therefore Plaintiff invokes his right to injunctive relief to remedy the discrimination.
- 111. Plaintiff is also entitled to compensatory damages, as well as civil penalties and fines under N.Y.C. Administrative Code § 8-120(8) and § 8-126(a) for each offense.
 - 112. Plaintiff is also entitled to reasonable attorneys' fees and costs.

113. Pursuant to N.Y.C. Administrative Code § 8-120(8) and § 8-126(a) and the remedies, procedures, and rights set forth and incorporated therein, Plaintiff prays for judgment as set forth below.

FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION

(Declaratory Relief)

- 114. Plaintiff repeats, realleges and incorporates by reference the allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 113 of this Complaint as though set forth at length herein.
- Plaintiff contends, and is informed and believes that Defendant denies, that lulufrost.com contains access barriers denying blind customers the full and equal access to the goods, services and facilities of lulufrost.com and by extension Lulu Frost Stores, which Lulu Frost owns, operates and/or controls, fails to comply with applicable laws including, but not limited to, Title III of the American with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 12182, et seq., N.Y. Exec. Law § 296, et seq., and N.Y.C. Administrative Code § 8-107, et seq. prohibiting discrimination against the blind.
- 116. A judicial declaration is necessary and appropriate at this time in order that each of the parties may know their respective rights and duties and act accordingly.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully demands judgment in favor of Plaintiff and the class and against the Defendants as follows:

a) A preliminary and permanent injunction to prohibit Defendant from violating the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 12182, et seq., N.Y. Exec. Law § 296, et seq., and N.Y.C. Administrative Code § 8-107, et seq., and the laws of New York;

b) A preliminary and permanent injunction requiring Defendant to take all the steps

necessary to make its website, lulufrost.com, into full compliance with the requirements

set forth in the ADA, and its implementing regulations, so that Lulufrost.com is readily

accessible to and usable by blind individuals;

c) A declaration that Defendant owns, maintains and/or operates its website, lulufrost.com,

in a manner which discriminates against the blind and which fails to provide access for

persons with disabilities as required by Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. §§

12182, et seq., N.Y. Exec. Law § 296, et seq., and N.Y.C. Administrative Code § 8-107,

et seq., and the laws of New York;

d) An order certifying this case as a class action under Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(a) & (b)(2) and/or

(b)(3), appointing Plaintiff as Class Representative, and his attorneys as Class Counsel;

e) Compensatory damages in an amount to be determined by proof, including all applicable

statutory damages and fines, to Plaintiff and the proposed class for violations of their civil

rights under New York State Human Rights Law and City Law;

Plaintiff's reasonable attorneys' fees, expenses, and costs of suit as provided by state and

federal law:

For pre- and post-judgment interest to the extent permitted by law; and

h) For such other and further relief which this court deems just and proper.

Dated: Brooklyn, New York September 25, 2017

> SHAKED LAW GROUP, P.C. Attorneys for Plaintiff

By:/s/Dan Shaked

Dan Shaked (DS-3331) 44 Court St., Suite 1217

Brooklyn, NY 11201 Tel. (917) 373-9128

e-mail: ShakedLawGroup@Gmail.com

Case 1:17-cv-05607 Document 1-1 Filed 09/26/17 Page 1 of 2 Page 10 4 Page 10

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.)

purpose of initiating the civil d	OCKET SHEET. (SEE INSTRUC	TIONS ON NEAT FAGE OF	rinsro						
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS				DEFENDANTS					
MARY CONNER, Individually and as the representative of a class of similarly situated persons				LULU FROST, INC.					
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Queens				County of Residence	of First Lis	ted Defendant			
(E.	XCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CA	ASES)			1	PLAINTIFF CASES O			
				NOTE: IN LAND CO	ONDEMNAT FOF LAND II	ION CASES, USE T NVOLVED.	HE LOCATION	OF	
Shaked Law Group, P.C	Address, and Telephone Numbe	er)		Attorneys (If Known)					
44 Court St., Suite 1217, (917) 373-9128									
II. BASIS OF JURISDI	ICTION (Place an "X" in C	One Box Only)		TIZENSHIP OF P (For Diversity Cases Only)	RINCIPA	AL PARTIES	(Place an "X" in and One Box 1		
☐ 1 U.S. Government				P	TF DEF		-	PTF	DEF
Plaintiff	(U.S. Government	Not a Party)	Citize	en of This State	11 🗇 1	Incorporated or Pr of Business In T		5 4	Ø 4
☐ 2 U.S. Government Defendant	☐ 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizensh	up of Parties in Item III)	Citize	en of Another State	12 🗇 2	Incorporated and I of Business In A		□ 5	O 5
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☐ 130 Miller Act	☐ 315 Airplane Product	Product Liability	□ 69	0 Other		JSC 157	3729(a)))	
☐ 140 Negotiable Instrument☐ 150 Recovery of Overpayment☐	Liability 320 Assault, Libel &	☐ 367 Health Care/ Pharmaceutical	-		PROPE	RTY RIGHTS	☐ 400 State Re ☐ 410 Antitrus		ment
& Enforcement of Judgment		Personal Injury	1		□ 820 Cop		☐ 430 Banks a		ng
☐ 151 Medicare Act	☐ 330 Federal Employers'	Product Liability	1		☐ 830 Pater	nt	450 Comme	erce	•
☐ 152 Recovery of Defaulted	Liability	☐ 368 Asbestos Personal	1			nt - Abbreviated	460 Deporta		4 4
Student Loans (Excludes Veterans)	☐ 340 Marine ☐ 345 Marine Product	Injury Product Liability			□ 840 Trad	Drug Application	☐ 470 Rackete	Organizat	
☐ 153 Recovery of Overpayment	Liability	PERSONAL PROPER	ту	LABOR		SECURITY	☐ 480 Consum		
of Veteran's Benefits	☐ 350 Motor Vehicle	370 Other Fraud	- 71	0 Fair Labor Standards	☐ 861 HIA		J 490 Cable/S		
☐ 160 Stockholders' Suits ☐ 190 Other Contract	355 Motor Vehicle Product Liability	371 Truth in Lending380 Other Personal	I 72	Act O Labor/Management		k Lung (923) C/DIWW (405(g))	☐ 850 Securiti Exchan		odities/
☐ 195 Contract Product Liability	360 Other Personal	Property Damage	'2	Relations	☐ 864 SSII		☐ 890 Other S		ctions
☐ 196 Franchise	Injury	385 Property Damage		0 Railway Labor Act	☐ 865 RSI	(405(g))	☐ 891 Agricul		
	☐ 362 Personal Injury - Medical Malpractice	Product Liability	D 75	I Family and Medical Leave Act			893 Environ		
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VI. CAUSE OF ACTIO	Brief description of ca		ACI, 42	U.S.C. Sec. 12181	, et seq.			,	· · · · ·
	in the description of ca		ation ad	ainst the visually im-	paired				
VII. REQUESTED IN		IS A CLASS ACTION		EMAND \$		CHECK YES only	if demanded in	complai	nt:
COMPLAINT:	UNDER RULE 2			D. 11 12 4		URY DEMAND:		□No	
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VIII. RELATED CASI IF ANY	(See instructions):	JUDGE (1)			DOCKE	ET NUMBER		CA PERSON TO A COMPANY	
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	CERTIFIC	ATION	OF A	ARITR	ATION	FLIGIBILIT	'V
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exclusiv certifica	ve of interention to the	Rule 83.10 provides that with certain exceptions, actions seeking money damages only in an amount not in excess of \$150,000, est and costs, are eligible for compulsory arbitration. The amount of damages is presumed to be below the threshold amount unless a contrary is filed.
I, DANS	HAKED	, counsel for MARY CONNER, do hereby certify that the above captioned civil action is ompulsory arbitration for the following reason(s):
ineligi	ble for c	ompulsory arbitration for the following reason(s):
	X	monetary damages sought are in excess of \$150,000, exclusive of interest and costs,
	X	the complaint seeks injunctive relief,
		the matter is otherwise ineligible for the following reason
		DISCLOSURE STATEMENT - FEDERAL RULES CIVIL PROCEDURE 7.1
		Identify any parent corporation and any publicly held corporation that owns 10% or more or its stocks:
		RELATED CASE STATEMENT (Section VIII on the Front of this Form)
provide because same ju case: (A	s that "A c the cases dge and ma) involves	s 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) rivil case is "related" to another civil case for purposes of this guideline when, because of the similarity of facts and legal issues or arise from the same transactions or events, a substantial saving of judicial resources is likely to result from assigning both cases to the agistrate judge." Rule 50.3.1 (b) provides that "A civil case shall not be deemed "related" to another civil case merely because the civil identical legal issues, or (B) involves the same parties." Rule 50.3.1 (c) further provides that "Presumptively, and subject to the power mine otherwise pursuant to paragraph (d), civil cases shall not be deemed to be "related" unless both cases are still pending before the
		NY-E DIVISION OF BUSINESS RULE 50.1(d)(2)
1.)	Is the ci	ivil action being filed in the Eastern District removed from a New York State Court located in Nassau or Suffolk
2.)		answered "no" above: the events or omissions giving rise to the claim or claims, or a substantial part thereof, occur in Nassau or Suffolk ? NO
	b) Did t District	the events or omissions giving rise to the claim or claims, or a substantial part thereof, occur in the Eastern
Suffolk	County, olk Count	o question 2 (b) is "No," does the defendant (or a majority of the defendants, if there is more than one) reside in Nassau or or, in an interpleader action, does the claimant (or a majority of the claimants, if there is more than one) reside in Nassau ty?
	(1)	
		BAR ADMISSION
I am cu	irrently ac	Imitted in the Eastern District of New York and currently a member in good standing of the bar of this court. Yes No
Are you	u currentl	y 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:

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

		et of New York
	Eastern Distric	tor new rork
MARY CONNER, Indiv representative of a class of s)))
Dl.:i.di	Y_1)
Plaintiff V.	(8)	Civil Action No. 17-cv- 5607
LULU FROS	ST. INC.)
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	t(s))
	SUMMONS IN	A CIVIL ACTION
To: (Defendant's name and address	S) LULU FROST, INC. 12 EAST 20TH STREET FL 2 NEW YORK, NY 10003	
A lawsuit has been fil	led against you.	
are the United States or a Uni P. 12 (a)(2) or (3) — you mus	ted States agency, or an office at serve on the plaintiff an ans	ou (not counting the day you received it) — or 60 days if you or or employee of the United States described in Fed. R. Civ. wer to the attached complaint or a motion under Rule 12 of n must be served on the plaintiff or plaintiff's attorney,
whose name and address are:	SHAKED LAW GROUP, P.0 44 COURT ST., SUITE 121 BROOKLYN, NY 11201	
If you fail to respond, You also must file your answer		entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint.
		DOUGLAS C. PALMER CLERK OF COURT
Date:	man i san ara Maria - Ma	
		Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk

AO 440 (Rev. 06/12) Summons in a Civil Action (Page 2)

Civil Action No. 17-cv-

PROOF OF SERVICE

(This section should not be filed with the court unless required by Fed. R. Civ. P. 4 (1))

	This summons for (nam	ne of individual and title, if an	y)		
was re	ceived by me on (date)		•		
	☐ I personally served	the summons on the indi	ividual at (place)		
	•				
			nce or usual place of abode with (name)	-	
			a person of suitable age and discretion who res	ides there,	
			copy to the individual's last known address; or		
	☐ I served the summo	ns on (name of individual)		, w	vho is
	designated by law to a	accept service of process	on behalf of (name of organization)		
			on (date)	; or	
	☐ I returned the summ	nons 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 info	rmation is true.		
		Þ			
Date:		_	Server's signature		
			Printed name and title	M 17 15	
			Server's address		

Additional information regarding attempted service, etc:

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: <u>Lulu Frost Accused of Discriminating Against Blind Internet Users</u>