UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA ATLANTA DIVISION

Erica Corker, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated;

Plaintiff,

Civil Action No:

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

-V.-

Tate & Kirlin Associates, Inc., Pinnacle Credit Services, LLC and John Does 1-25,

Defendants.

Plaintiff Erica Corker (hereinafter, "Plaintiff" or "Corker"), a Georgia resident, brings this Class Action Complaint by and through her attorneys, Mason Law Group, P.C., against Defendant Tate & Kirlin Associates, Inc. (hereinafter "Defendant Tate & Kirlin") and Defendant Pinnacle Credit Services, LLC (hereinafter "Defendant Pinnacle"), individually and on behalf of a class of all others similarly situated, pursuant to Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, based upon information and belief of Plaintiff's counsel, except for allegations specifically pertaining to Plaintiff, which are based upon Plaintiff's personal knowledge.

INTRODUCTION/PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

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

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

The Court has jurisdiction over this class action pursuant to 15 U.S.C.
 § 1692 et. seq. and 28 U.S.C. § 2201. The Court has pendent jurisdiction over the
 State law claims in this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367(a).

4. Venue is proper in this judicial district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(2), as this is where a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claim occurred.

NATURE OF THE ACTION

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

6. Plaintiff is seeking damages and declaratory relief.

PARTIES

7. Plaintiff is a resident of the State of Georgia, County of Dekalb, with an address at P.O. Box 456, Pine Lake, GA 30072.

8. Defendant Tate & Kirlin is a "debt collector" as the phrase is defined in 15 U.S.C. § 1692(a)(6) and used in the FDCPA with an address at 580 Middletown Blvd, Suite 240, Langhorne, PA 19047.

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

10. Defendant Pinnacle is a "debt collector" as the phrase is defined in 15U.S.C. § 1692(a)(6) and used in the FDCPA with an address at 300B High St.,Jefferson City, MO 65101-3213 .

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

12. 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

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

14. The Class consists of:

- a. all individual in the State of Georgia;
- b. to whom Defendant Tate & Kirlin sent a collection letter attempting to collect a consumer debt;
- c. whose letter states that Defendant Pinnacle will not sue the consumer;

- d. without clearly stating that the consumer could no longer be sued by any party;
- e. Additionally, the letter fails to disclose that the previously-lapsed statute of limitations to file a lawsuit to collect the debt will recommence upon payment;
- f. which letter was sent on or after a date one (1) year prior to the filing of this action and on or before a date twenty-one (21) days after the filing of this action.

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 Class are the Defendants and all officer, 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 Class, which common issues predominate over any issues involving only individual class members. The principal issue is whether the Defendants' written communications

to consumers, in the forms attached as Exhibit A, violate 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e and 1692f.

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

19. This action has been brought, and may properly be maintained, as a class action pursuant to the provisions of Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure because there is a well-defined community interest in the litigation:

- a. <u>Numerosity:</u> The Plaintiff is informed and believes, and on that basis alleges, that the Plaintiff Class defined above is 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 Class 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 USC §1692e and §1692f.

- c. <u>Typicality</u>: The Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the class members. The Plaintiff and all members of the Plaintiff Class have claims arising out of the Defendants' common uniform course of conduct complained of herein.
- d. <u>Adequacy:</u> The Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the class members insofar as Plaintiff has no interests that are adverse to the absent class members. The Plaintiff is committed to vigorously litigating this matter. Plaintiff has also retained counsel experienced in handling consumer lawsuits, complex legal issues, and class actions. Neither the Plaintiff nor her 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.

20. Certification of a class under Rule 23(b)(3) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure is also appropriate in that the questions of law and fact common to members of the Plaintiff Class predominate over any questions affecting an individual member, and a class action is superior to other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of the controversy.

21. Depending on the outcome of further investigation and discovery, Plaintiff may, at the time of class certification motion, seek to certify a class(es) only as to particular issues pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(c)(4).

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

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

23. Some time prior to June 13, 2017, an obligation was allegedly incurred to Verizon Wireless by the Plaintiff.

24. The Verizon Wireless obligation arose out of a transaction for personal cellular phone services in which money, property, insurance or services, the

subject of the transaction, were primarily for personal, family or household purposes.

25. The alleged Verizon Wireless obligation is a "debt" as defined by 15U.S.C.§ 1692a(5).

26. Due to her financial constraints, Plaintiff could not pay the alleged debt, and it went into default.

27. Sometime thereafter, Defendant Pinnacle purportedly purchased the alleged debt.

28. Defendant Pinnacle, a subsequent owner of the Verizon Wireless debt, contracted with the Defendant Tate & Kirlin to collect the alleged debt.

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

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

31. Defendant Tate & Kirlin is a "debt collector" as defined in 15 U.S.C. §1692a(6) of the FDCPA.

Violation – June 13, 2017 Collection Letter

32. On or about June 13, 2017, Defendant Tate & Kirlin sent Plaintiff a collection letter (the "Letter") regarding the alleged debt owed to Defendant Pinnacle. See Letter at Exhibit A.

33. The very bottom of the Collection Letter states in part: "The law limits how long you can be sued on a debt. Because of the age of your debt, Pinnacle Credit Services, LLC will not sue you for it."

34. The alleged debt is time-barred, meaning that Defendant Pinnacle cannot sue Plaintiff.

35. The Letter implies that Defendant Pinnacle has chosen not to sue ("will not sue you"), instead of the true fact that neither Defendant Pinnacle, nor Defendant Tate & Kirlin, nor any subsequent creditor/collector can file a lawsuit.

36. The statement contained in Defendant Tate & Kirlin's letter is materially deceptive to the unsophisticated consumer, who would believe that Defendant Pinnacle or a subsequent creditor has the option to change its mind should he/she not pay the alleged debt.

37. Moreover, the Collection Letter is completely silent as to the rights of the debt collector, Defendant Tate & Kirlin, to file a lawsuit against the consumer.

38. Finally, the Collection Letter is materially deceptive as it fails to disclose that the previously-lapsed statute of limitations to file a lawsuit to collect the debt will recommence upon payment by Plaintiff.

39. By seeking payment of the Verizon debt from Plaintiff without informing her that payment would restart the statute of limitations, Defendants engaged in unfair collection practices, in violation of 15 U.S.C. §1692f.

40. Furthermore, Defendants made deceptive and misleading representations when they communicated to Plaintiff that Defendant Pinnacle was opting not to sue Plaintiff, when in fact, it was not permitted to sue as a matter of law, in violation of 15 U.S.C. §§1692e, 1692e(2) and 1692e(10).

41. As a result of Defendants' deceptive, misleading and unfair debt collection practices, Plaintiff has been damaged.

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

42. 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.

43. Defendants' debt collection efforts attempted and/or directed towards the Plaintiff violated various provisions of the FDCPA, including but not limited to 15 U.S.C. § 1692e.

44. 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.

45. Defendants made deceptive and misleading representations when they communicated to Plaintiff that Defendant Pinnacle was choosing not to sue Plaintiff, when in fact, it was not permitted to sue as a matter of law, in violation of 15 U.S.C. §§1692e, 1692e(2) and 1692e(10).

46. By reason thereof, Defendants are liable to Plaintiff for judgment that Defendants' conduct violated Section 1692e et seq. of the FDCPA, actual damages, statutory damages, costs and attorneys' fees.

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

47. 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.

48. Defendants' debt collection efforts attempted and/or directed towards the Plaintiff violated various provisions of the FDCPA, including but not limited to 15 U.S.C. § 1692f.

49. Pursuant to 15 USC §1692f, a debt collector may not use any unfair or unconscionable means to collect or attempt to collect any debt.

50. Defendants violated 15 U.S.C. §1692f by unfairly failing to clearly and adequately inform the consumer as to the true legal status of the debt and potential ramifications resulting from non-payment.

51. Defendants further violated §1692f by unfairly seeking payment of the debt without advising Plaintiff that making payment would restart the statute of limitations and allow them to sue her again.

52. By reason thereof, Defendants are liable to Plaintiff for judgment that Defendants' conduct violated Section 1692f et seq. of the FDCPA, actual damages, statutory damages, costs and attorneys' fees.

DEMAND FOR TRIAL BY JURY

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

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff Erica Corker, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated, demands judgment from Defendant Tate & Kirlin Associates, Inc. and Defendant Pinnacle Credit Services, LLC, as follows:

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

2. Awarding Plaintiff and the Class statutory damages;

3. Awarding Plaintiff and the Class actual damages;

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

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

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

Dated: June 5, 2018

Respectfully Submitted,

<u>/s/ Jonathan Mason</u> Attorney for Plaintiff Jonathan B. Mason, Esq. Georgia Bar No. 475659 Mason Law Group, P.C. 1100 Peachtree Street, NE, Suite 200 Atlanta, GA 30309 Phone: 404.920.8040

Fax: 404.920.8039 Email: jmason@atlshowbizlaw.com

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE WITH LOCAL RULE 7.1D

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

Dated: June 5, 2018

Respectfully Submitted,

<u>/s/ Jonathan Mason</u> <u>Attorney for Plaintiff</u> Jonathan B. Mason, Esq. Georgia Bar No. 475659 Mason Law Group, P.C. 1100 Peachtree Street, NE, Suite 200 Atlanta, GA 30309 Phone: 404.920.8040 Fax: 404.920.8039 Email: jmason@atlshowbizlaw.com Case 1:18-cv-02740-LMM-LTW Document 1-1 Filed 06/05/18 Page 1 of 2

EXHIBIT A

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Suite 240 580 Middletown Blvd Langhome, PA 19047

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TATE & KIRLIN ASSOCIATES, INC.

Toll Free (866) 520-3790 • (215) 253-4351 www.pavtka.com

Erica Corker

Original Creditor: Creditor: Account Number: TKA Account #: Total Due:

VERIZON WIRELESS PINNACLE CREDIT SERVICES LLC xxxxxxxxxxx0001 8122 \$745.69

June 13, 2017

YOUR OPPORTUNITY

Our client has authorized us to offer a discount for 35% of your balance or \$260.99 to satisfy this account. (Saving you \$484.70)

Please respond by 07-04-17 to take advantage of this offer. We are not obligated to renew this offer. Please contact our office at our toll free number should you have any questions or wish to determine if this discount offer can be made in installments or eligible for an extension.

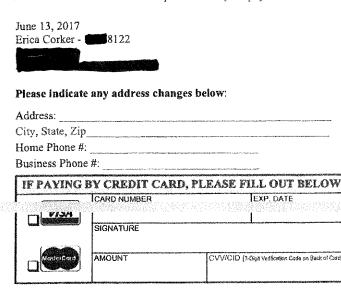
This communication is from a debt collector and is an attempt to collect a debt. Any information obtained will be used for that purpose. Please note that a negative credit bureau report reflecting on your credit record may be submitted to a credit reporting agency by the current account owner if you fail to fulfill the terms of your credit obligations. This notice in no way affects any rights you may have. Please retain the upper portion of this letter for your records.

3 convenient ways to pay

We accept check, money order, Visa/Mastercard (Debit or Credit) • Pay by Phone - Call (866)520-3790 Pay online at <u>www.paytka.com</u> using Account # 2010 8122

The law limits how long you can be sued on a debt. Because of the age of your debt, PINNACLE CREDIT SERVICES LLC will not sue you for it. If you do not pay the debt, PINNACLE CREDIT SERVICES LLC may report or continue to report it to the credit reporting agencies as unpaid.

Please detach and return bottom portion with your payment in the envelope supplied; be sure the address below shows through the return envelope window.



Enclosed is a payment of \$260.99 to satisfy my account



Tate & Kirlin Associates, Inc. Suite 240 580 Middletown Blvd

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JS44 (Rev. 11/16 NDGA) ase 1:18-cv-02740-LMM-CTWIL COVER SHEET Filed 06/05/18 Page 1 of 2

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

I. (a) PLAINTIFF(S) Erica Corker, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated		DEFENDANT(S) Tate & Kirlin Associates, Inc.,
		Pinnacle Credit Services, LLC and John Does 1-25,
(b) COUNTY OF RESIDENCE OF FIRST LISTED PLAINTIFF Dekalb (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)		COUNTY OF RESIDENCE OF FIRST LISTED DEFENDANT (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY) NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED
(c) ATTORNEYS (FIRM NAME, ADDRESS, TELEPHONE NUMBER, AND E-MAIL ADDRESS)		ATTORNEYS (IF KNOWN)
Jonathan B. Mason, Esq. Mason Law Group, P.C. 1100 Peachtree Street, NE, Suite 200 Atlanta, GA 30309 404.920.8040 jmason@atlshowbizlaw.com		
II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION (PLACE AN "X" IN ONE BOX ONLY)		ZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES N "X" IN ONE BOX FOR PLAINTIFF AND ONE BOX FOR DEFENDANT) (FOR DIVERSITY CASES ONLY)
$\square_{1 \text{ U.S. GOVERNMENT}} \blacksquare_{3 \text{ FEDERAL QUESTION}} PLF DEF \qquad \square_{1 \text{ CITIZEN OF THIS STATE}} \square_{4 \text{ USCORPORATED OR PRINCIPAL}}$		
PLAINTIFF (U.S. GOVERNMENT NOT A PARTY) 2 U.S. GOVERNMENT DEFENDANT (INDICATE CITIZENSHIP OF PARTIES IN ITEM III)	PLACE OF BUSINESS IN THIS STATE PLACE OF BUSINESS IN THIS STATE PLACE OF BUSINESS IN THIS STATE INCORPORATED AND PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS IN ANOTHER STATE PLACE OF BUSINESS IN ANOTHER STATE PLACE OF BUSINESS IN THIS STATE PLACE OF BUSINESS IN ANOTHER STATE	
IV. ORIGIN PROCEEDING PROVED FROM STATE COURT STATE COURT APPELLATE COURT APP		
MULTIDISTRICT 8 LITIGATION - DIRECT FILE		
V. CAUSE OF ACTION (CITE THE U.S. CIVIL STATUTE UNDER WHICH YOU ARE FILING AND WRITE A BRIEF STATEMENT OF CAUSE - DO NOT CITE JURISDICTIONAL STATUTES UNLESS DIVERSITY)		
15 U.S.C. 1692 et seq. Fair Debt Collection Practices Act ("FDCPA") - Defendant sent a false, deceptive and misleading collection letter to Plaintiff in violation of the FDCPA.		
(IF COMPLEX, CHECK REASON BELOW)		
\square 1. Unusually large number of parties.	🗌 6. Prob	lems locating or preserving evidence
\Box 2. Unusually large number of claims or defenses.		ing parallel investigations or actions by government.
3. Factual issues are exceptionally complex	_	iple use of experts.
4. Greater than normal volume of evidence.		d for discovery outside United States boundaries.
\Box 5. Extended discovery period is needed.	[]10. Exist	ence of highly technical issues and proof.
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY		
RECEIPT # AMOUNT \$	APPLYING	G IFP MAG. JUDGE (IFP)

NATURE OF SUIT

CAUSE OF ACTION

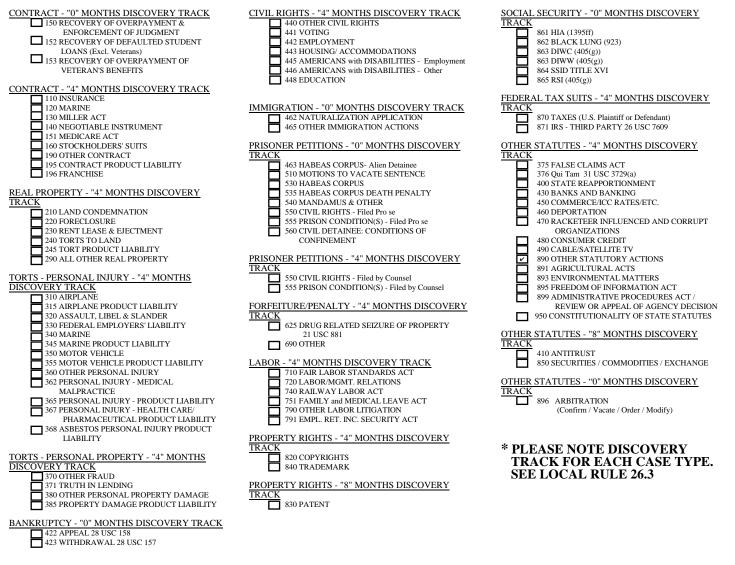
JUDGE

MAG. JUDGE

(Referral)

Case 1:18-cv-02740-LMM-LTW Document 1-2 Filed 06/05/18 Page 2 of 2

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



VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:

└ CHECK IF CLASS ACTION UNDER F.R.Civ.P. 23 DEMAND \$______ JURY DEMAND └ YES □ NO (CHECK YES <u>ONLY</u> IF DEMANDED IN COMPLAINT)

VIII. RELATED/REFILED CASE(S) IF ANY

JUDGE_

DOCKET NO._

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

- □ 1. PROPERTY INCLUDED IN AN EARLIER NUMBERED PENDING SUIT.
- □ 2. SAME ISSUE OF FACT OR ARISES OUT OF THE SAME EVENT OR TRANSACTION INCLUDED IN AN EARLIER NUMBERED PENDING SUIT.
- □ 3. VALIDITY OR INFRINGEMENT OF THE SAME PATENT, COPYRIGHT OR TRADEMARK INCLUDED IN AN EARLIER NUMBERED PENDING SUIT.
- 4. APPEALS ARISING OUT OF THE SAME BANKRUPTCY CASE AND ANY CASE RELATED THERETO WHICH HAVE BEEN DECIDED BY THE SAME BANKRUPTCY JUDGE,
- ☐ 5. REPETITIVE CASES FILED BY PRO SE LITIGANTS.
- 6. COMPANION OR RELATED CASE TO CASE(S) BEING SIMULTANEOUSLY FILED (INCLUDE ABBREVIATED STYLE OF OTHER CASE(S)):

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

, WHICH WAS

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: <u>Tate & Kirlin, Pinnacle Credit Accused of Misleading Woman Regarding Time-Barred Debt</u>