UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY

YOSEF GOLUBCHIK, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated;

Plaintiff,

Civil Action 2:18 cv 16113

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT
DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

-v.-

FROST- ARNETT COMPANY, JOHN DOES 1-25

Defendant(s).

Plaintiff Yosef Golubchik (hereinafter, "Plaintiff"), a New Jersey resident, brings this Class Action Complaint by and through his attorneys, Stein Saks PLLC, against Defendant Frost- Arnett Company (hereinafter "Defendant"), individually and on behalf of a class of all others similarly situated, pursuant to Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, based upon information and belief of Plaintiff's counsel, except for allegations specifically pertaining to Plaintiff, which are based upon Plaintiff's personal knowledge.

INTRODUCTION/PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

1. Congress enacted the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (hereinafter, "the FDCPA" or "Act") in 1977 in response to the "abundant evidence of the use of abusive, deceptive, and unfair debt collection practices by many debt collectors." 15 U.S.C. §1692(a). At that time, Congress was concerned that "abusive debt collection practices contribute to the number of personal bankruptcies, to material instability, to the loss of jobs, and to invasions of individual

privacy." *Id.* Congress concluded that "existing laws...[we]re inadequate to protect consumers," and that "the effective collection of debts" does not require "misrepresentation or other abusive debt collection practices." 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692(b) & (c).

2. Congress explained that the purpose of the Act was not only to eliminate abusive debt collection practices, but also to "insure that those debt collectors who refrain from using abusive debt collection practices are not competitively disadvantaged." *Id.* § 1692(e). After determining that the existing consumer protection laws ·were inadequate ~ *Id.* § 1692(b), Congress gave consumers a private cause of action against debt collectors who fail to comply with the Act. *Id.* § 1692k.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 3. The Court has jurisdiction over this class action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 and 15 U.S.C. § 1692 et. seq. The Court has pendent jurisdiction over all 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 New Jersey 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 New Jersey, County of Middlesex, residing at 1514 Parker Rd, Highland Park, NJ, 08904.

- 8. Frost-Arnett Company 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 2105 Elm Hill Pike, Ste 200, Nashville, TN, 37210.
- 9. Upon information and belief, Defendant is a company that uses the mail, telephone, and facsimile and regularly engages in business the principal purpose of which is to attempt to collect debts alleged to be due another.
- 10. 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

- 11. Plaintiff brings this claim on behalf of the following case, pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(a) and 23(b)(3).
 - 12. The Class consists of:
 - a. all individuals with addresses in the State of New Jersey;
 - b. to whom Frost-Arnett sent an initial collection letter attempting to collect a consumer debt;
 - c. that deceives the consumer by omitting the complete and accurate requirement that every part of a consumer's dispute of a debt must be in writing, as provided for under §1692g (the "G-Notice");
 - d. 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.
- 13. 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.

- 14. 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.
- 15. 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 & 1692g.
- 16. 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 his attorneys have any interests, which might cause them not to vigorously pursue this action.
- 17. 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 U.S.C. §§ 1692e & 1692g.
- c. <u>Typicality:</u> The Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the class members.
 The Plaintiff and all members of the Plaintiff Class have claims arising out of the Defendants' common uniform course of conduct complained of herein.
- d. Adequacy: 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 his 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.
- 18. 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.

19. 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

- 20. 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.
- 21. Some time prior to July 3, 2018, an obligation was allegedly incurred to Anesthesia Consultants of NJ.
- 22. The Anesthesia Consultants of NJ obligation arose out of a transaction where Plaintiff was given medical services.
- 23. The alleged Anesthesia Consultants of NJ obligation is a "debt" as defined by 15 U.S.C.\(\} 1692a(5).
 - 24. Anesthesia Consultants of NJ is a "creditor" as defined by 15 U.S.C.\(\) 1692a(4).
- 25. Anesthesia Consultants of NJ, or a subsequent owner of the Anesthesia Consultants of NJ debt, contracted with the Defendant to collect the alleged debt.
- 26. Defendant collects and attempts to collect debts incurred or alleged to have been incurred for personal, family or household purposes on behalf of creditors using the United States Postal Services, telephone and internet.

<u>Violation – July 3, 2018 Collection Letter</u>

- 27. On or about July 3, 2018, Defendant sent Plaintiff an initial contact notice (the "Letter") regarding the alleged debt owed. A true and accurate copy of the Letter is attached as Exhibit A.
- 28. When a debt collector solicits payment from a consumer, it must, within five days of an initial communication send the consumer a written notice containing:
 - (1) the amount of the debt;
 - (2) the name of the creditor to whom the debt is owed;
 - (3) a statement that unless the consumer, within thirty days after receipt of the notice, disputes the validity of the debt, or any portion thereof, the debt will be assumed to be valid by the debt collector;
 - (4) a statement that if the consumer notifies the debt collector in writing within the thirty-day period that the debt, or any portion thereof, is disputed, the debt collector will obtain verification of the debt or a copy of the judgment against the consumer and a copy of such verification or judgment will be mailed to the consumer by the debt collector; and (5) a statement that, upon the consumer's written request within the thirty-day period, the debt collector will provide the consumer with the name and address of the original creditor, if different from the current creditor. 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a).
- 29. The FDCPA further provides that "if the consumer notifies the debt collector in writing within the thirty day period . . . that the debt, or any portion thereof, is disputed . . . the debt collector shall cease collection . . . until the debt collector obtains verification of the debt . . . and a copy of such verification is mailed to the consumer by the debt collector." 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(b).

- 30. Specifically, with regard to section 1692g(a)(3), the Third Circuit has made clear that "any dispute, to be effective, must be in writing." *Graziano v. Harrison*, 950 F.2d 107, 112 (3d Cir. 1991).
- 31. Thus, within the Third Circuit, a debt collector's written disclosure must convey the requirement that a consumer must dispute a debt <u>in writing</u> under §1692g(a)(3).
- 32. [I]n order to comply with the requirements of § 1692g, more is required than the mere inclusion of the statutory debt validation notice in the debt collection letter—the required notice must also be conveyed effectively to the debtor." *Wilson v. Quadramed Corp.*, 225 F.3d 350, 354 (3d Cir. 2000), as amended (Sept. 7, 2000) (citations omitted). A debt collector violates the FDCPA when a validation notice is "overshadowed" or "contradicted by other portions of the communication. Id. at 111; Wilson, 225 F.3d at 354.
- 33. The Letter does not meet the required guidelines of the FDCPA, as interpreted by the Third Circuit, because it falsely omits the requirement of the "G Notice" in the first sentence by leaving out the requirement that a consumer must dispute in writing.
- 34. In omitting the writing requirement, Defendant falsely communicates the consumer's requirements under the FDCPA.
- 35. Furthermore, the second sentence of the "G Notice" begins: "If" you notify us in writing..., implying that the writing requirement is voluntary. When coupled with the failure of the first sentence to contain any mention of the word "writing," the least sophisticated consumer would be confused as to what his actual requirements were for properly disputing the debt.
- 36. Pursuant to section 1692g(a)(3), the Third Circuit has made clear that "any dispute, to be effective, must be in writing." *Graziano v. Harrison*, 950 F.2d 107, 112 (3d Cir. 1991). Thus, a written disclosure that fails to convey the requirement that a consumer must dispute a debt in writing falls afoul of the FDCPA's requirements.

- 37. This false and inaccurate portion of the Letter is misleading because it fails to advise Plaintiff of the proper method for exercising his dispute and validation rights under the FDCPA.
- 38. Plaintiff sustained an informational injury as he was not fully apprised of his rights and responsibilities necessary to properly exercise his options under §1692g.
- 39. As a result of Defendant's false statements, Plaintiff effectively waived his rights to this statutorily available information because he was not properly informed of the "G-Notice" requirements set forth in the FDCPA, as interpreted in the Third Circuit.
- 40. As a result of Defendant's deceptive, misleading and false debt collection practices, Plaintiff has been damaged.

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

- 41. 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.
- 42. 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. § 1692e.
- 43. 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.
 - 44. Defendant violated §1692e:
 - a. As the Letter it is open to more than one reasonable interpretation, at least one of which is inaccurate.
 - b. By making a false and misleading representation in violation of §1692e(10).

45. 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.

- 46. 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.
- 47. 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.
 - 48. Pursuant to 15 USC §1692g, a debt collector:

Within five days after the initial communication with a consumer in connection with the collection of any debt, a debt collector shall, unless the following information is contained in the initial communication or the consumer has paid the debt, send the consumer a written notice containing –

- 1. The amount of the debt;
- 2. The name of the creditor to whom the debt is owed;
- 3. A statement that unless the consumer, within thirty days after receipt of the notice, disputes the validity of the debt, or any portion thereof, the debt will be assumed to be valid by the debtcollector;
- 4. A statement that the consumer notifies the debt collector in writing within 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 judgment will be mailed to the consumer by the debt collector; and

- 5. A statement that, upon the consumer's written request within the thirty-day period, the debt collector will provide the consumer with the name and address of the original creditor, if different from the current creditor.
- 49. The Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. §1692g, by falsely misstating the consumer's rights by omitting the requirement that he must request validation and make any dispute of the debt in writing.
- 50. 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.

DEMAND FOR TRIAL BY JURY

51. 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 Yosef Golubchik, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated, demands judgment from Defendant Frost-Arnett as follows:

- 1. Declaring that this action is properly maintainable as a Class Action and certifying Plaintiff as Class representative, and Yaakov Saks, 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: Hackensack, New Jersey November 13, 2018

/s/ Yaakov Saks

By: Yaakov Saks, Esq. **Stein Saks, PLLC** 285 Passaic Street Hackensack, NJ 07601 Phone: 201-282-6500

Fax: 201-282-6501

Email: ysaks@steinsakslegal.com

Attorneys for Plaintiff

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provided by local rules of court purpose of initiating the civil de	. This form, approved by the	he Judicial Conference of the	ne United States in September 1	974, is required for the use of	the Clerk of Court for the
L (a) PLAINTIFFS YOSEF GOLUBCHIK, in situated;	dividually and on beha	alf of all others similarly	PEFENDANTS FROST- ARNETT COMPANY, JOHN DOES 1-25		
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Middlesex (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, 2) Yaakov Saks- Stein Saks 285 Passaic Street, Hack (201) 282-6500 ext 101	s, PLLC	r)	Attorneys (If Known)		
II. BASIS OF JURISDI	CTION (Place an "X" in C	One Box Only)	I. CITIZENSHIP OF P	RINCIPAL PARTIES	(Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintij
☐ 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff	■ 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government)	Not a Party)		TF DEF 1 □ 1 Incorporated or Pr of Business In T	•
☐ 2 U.S. Government Defendant	☐ 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizensh	ip of Parties in Item III)	Citizen of Another State	2	
			Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country	3	□ 6 □ 6
IV. NATURE OF SUIT		nly) DRTS	FORFEITURE/PENALTY	Click here for: Nature of BANKRUPTCY	of Suit Code Descriptions. OTHER STATUTES
□ 110 Insurance □ 120 Marine □ 130 Miller Act □ 140 Negotiable Instrument □ 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment □ 151 Medicare Act □ 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Excludes Veterans) □ 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits □ 160 Stockholders' Suits □ 190 Other Contract □ 195 Contract Product Liability □ 196 Franchise REAL PROPERTY □ 210 Land Condemnation □ 220 Foreclosure □ 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment □ 240 Torts to Land □ 245 Tort Product Liability □ 290 All Other Real Property	PERSONAL INJURY 310 Airplane 315 Airplane Product Liability 320 Assault, Libel & Slander 330 Federal Employers' Liability 340 Marine 345 Marine Product Liability 350 Motor Vehicle Product Liability 360 Other Personal Injury 362 Personal Injury - Medical Malpractice CIVIL RIGHTS 440 Other Civil Rights 441 Voting 442 Employment 443 Housing/ Accommodations 445 Amer. w/Disabilities - Employment 446 Amer. w/Disabilities - Other 448 Education	PERSONAL INJURY 365 Personal Injury - Product Liability 367 Health Care/ Pharmaceutical Personal Injury Product Liability 368 Asbestos Personal Injury Product Liability PERSONAL PROPERTY 370 Other Fraud 371 Truth in Lending 380 Other Personal Property Damage 385 Property Damage 385 Property Damage Product Liability PRISONER PETITIONS Habeas Corpus: 463 Alien Detainee 510 Motions to Vacate Sentence 530 General 535 Death Penalty Other: 540 Mandamus & Other 550 Civil Rights 555 Prison Condition 560 Civil Detainee - Conditions of Confinement	G25 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881 ☐ 690 Other LABOR ☐ 710 Fair Labor Standards Act ☐ 720 Labor/Management Relations ☐ 740 Railway Labor Act ☐ 751 Family and Medical Leave Act ☐ 790 Other Labor Litigation ☐ 791 Employee Retirement Income Security Act IMMIGRATION ☐ 462 Naturalization Application ☐ 465 Other Immigration Actions	□ 422 Appeal 28 USC 158 □ 423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157 PROPERTY RIGHTS □ 820 Copyrights □ 830 Patent □ 835 Patent - Abbreviated New Drug Application □ 840 Trademark SOCIAL SECURITY □ 861 HIA (1395ff) □ 862 Black Lung (923) □ 863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g)) □ 864 SSID Title XVI □ 865 RSI (405(g)) FEDERAL TAX SUITS □ 870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff or Defendant) □ 871 IRS—Third Party 26 USC 7609	375 False Claims Act 376 Qui Tam (31 USC 3729(a)) 400 State Reapportionment 410 Antitrust 430 Banks and Banking 450 Commerce 460 Deportation 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations 480 Consumer Credit 490 Cable/Sat TV 850 Securities/Commodities/Exchange 890 Other Statutory Actions 891 Agricultural Acts 893 Environmental Matters 895 Freedom of Information Act 896 Arbitration 899 Administrative Procedure Act/Review or Appeal of Agency Decision 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes
	moved from 3 te Court Cite the U.S. Civil Sta	Appellate Court	(specify,	r District Litigation Transfer	
VI. CAUSE OF ACTIO	DN 15 U.S.C. § 1692 Brief description of ca	ause:	Collection Practices Act		
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:		IS A CLASS ACTION	DEMAND \$	CHECK YES only JURY DEMAND:	if demanded in complaint:
VIII. RELATED CASI IF ANY	E(S) (See instructions):	JUDGE		DOCKET NUMBER	
DATE		SIGNATURE OF ATTOR	NEY OF RECORD		
11/13/2018 FOR OFFICE USE ONLY		/s/Yaakov Saks			
	MOUNT	APPLYING IFP	JUDGE	MAG. JUD	OGE

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EXHIBIT A

FROST-ARN

PO Box 198988 Nashville TN 37219-8988

PH: (615)255-3469 / (855) 287-7043

Mm, frosz-arasz. com

Convenient Payment Options

Secure Online: www.facpayments.com

By Phone: (888) 536-2680 or IVR at (615) 647-9129

By Mail: Detach lower portion and return with payment



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

IMPORTANT COLLECTION NOTICE

Dear Yosef Golubchik

Your account has been placed with this agency for collection.

Please mail your remittance to our office so this matter may be resolved. If you are unable to pay in full at this time, you should contact this office to request payment arrangements.

Unless you notify this office within 30 days after receiving this notice that you dispute the validity of this debt or any portion thereof this office will assume this debt is valid. If you notify this office in writing within 30 days from receiving this notice that 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 in writing within 30 days after receiving this notice this office will provide you with the name and address of the original creditor, if different from the current creditor.

YOU OWE:

Creditor	Amount Owed	Turnover
ANESTHESIA CONSULTANTS OF NJ TOTAL NEW ACCOUNTS: 1276.60	1276.60	06/29/18
, * a		
		5 a 5

PLEASE SEE BACK FOR FURTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

NOTICE

29SDNAFA110A1 01627119

When you pay your bill by check, you authorize us to electronically process your payment. If your check is processed electronically, your checking account may be debited on the same day we receive the check and it will not be returned with your checking account statement. If someone other that you or a bill paying service pays your bill, you must give a copy of this notice to them before the payment is sent to us. Any check returned for Insufficient funds or account closed will be assessed a processing fee puritient to state take unless otherwise prohibiters as sent to ed a processing lee puriosint to state laws unless otherwise prohibited by state or federal law

SD11 PO Box 1280 Oaks PA 19456-1280 ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

July 3, 2018

Total Owed: **\$1276.6**0 Master Number:

Please include above master number on your check or money order.

Payment Amount: \$

The below address is for payment and correspondence only.

FROST-ARNETT COMPANY PO Box 198988 Nashville TN 37219-8988 <u>Արիլիաններ հիմիի գորակին հիմարկորհային ինքնադանանի</u>

լլիկալիլիլիլիլի անակաների անդականի անդապետի այներ Yosef Golubchik 1514 Parker Rd Highland Park NJ 08904-3744

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: <u>Frost-Arnett Company Facing Lawsuit Over 'Misleading' Debt Dispute Instructions</u>