# UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA ATLANTA DIVISION

ALISHA HAYES, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated,

Plaintiff(s),

**Civil Action No:** 

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

-V.-

CREDIT COUNSEL, INC., and John Does 1-25

Defendant(s).

Plaintiff Alisha Hayes (hereinafter, "Plaintiff" or "Hayes"), a Georgia resident, brings this Class Action Complaint by and through her attorneys, Mason Law Group, P.C., against Defendant Credit Counsel, Inc. (hereinafter "Defendant" or "Credit Counsel"), 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 FDCPA in 1977 in response to the "abundant

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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 <u>28 U.S.C.</u> <u>§ 1331</u> and <u>15 U.S.C.</u> § <u>1692</u> et. seq. The Court also has pendent jurisdiction over the State law claims in this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367(a).

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4. Venue is proper in this judicial district pursuant to <u>28 U.S.C.</u> <u>§ 1391(b)(2)</u> 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 and injunctive relief.

# **PARTIES**

7. Plaintiff is a resident of the State of Georgia, County of Cobb, residing at 2858 Lakemont Drive, Marietta, Georgia 30060.

8. Defendant Credit Counsel, Inc. is a "debt collector" as the phrase is defined in <u>15 U.S.C. § 1692(a)(6)</u> and used in the FDCPA with an address at 1400 NE Miami Gardens Drive, Ste 216, Miami, FL 33179.

9. Upon information and belief, Defendant Credit Counsel, Inc. 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. Plaintiffs bring this claim on behalf of the following class, 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 Georgia;
- b. who were sent a letter from Defendant Credit Counsel, Inc. attempting to collect a consumer debt;
- c. whose letter gives a final demand with a threat of a lawsuit, in which legal action was never intended to be taken;
- 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 Classes are the Defendants and all officer, members, partners, managers, directors and employees of the Defendants and

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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 Classes, which common issues predominate over any issues involving only individual class members. The principal issue is whether the Defendants' written communications to consumers, in the forms attached as Exhibits A, violate 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e and 1692f.

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

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:

e. <u>Numerosity:</u> The Plaintiffs are informed and believe, and on that basis allege, that the Plaintiff Classes defined above are so numerous that joinder of all members would be impractical.

- f. <u>Common Questions Predominate</u>: Common questions of law and fact exist as to all members of the Plaintiff Classes and those questions predominance 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.
- g. <u>Typicality:</u> The Plaintiffs' claims are typical of the claims of the class members. The Plaintiffs and all members of the Plaintiff Classes have claims arising out of the Defendants' common uniform course of conduct complained of herein.
- h. <u>Adequacy</u>: The Plaintiffs will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the class members insofar as Plaintiffs have no interests that are adverse to the absent class members. The Plaintiffs are committed to vigorously litigating this matter. Plaintiffs have also retained counsel experienced in handling consumer lawsuits, complex legal issues, and class actions. Neither the Plaintiffs nor their counsel have any interests which might cause them not to vigorously pursue the instant class action lawsuit.
- i. <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 Classes predominate over any questions affecting an individual member, and a class action is superior to other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of the controversy.

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

### **FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS**

20. Plaintiff incorporates by reference all of the above paragraphs of this Complaint as though fully state herein with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.

21. On information and belief, on a date better known to Defendant, Defendant began collection activities on an alleged consumer debt from the Plaintiff ("Alleged Debt").

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22. This debt was incurred as a personal medical obligation with the original creditor of Concentra Medical Centers Georgia which was incurred for personal purposes and is therefore a "debt" as that term is defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(5).

23. On or around May 1, 2017, Defendant sent a collection letter to Plaintiff. See Collection Letter attached hereto as **Exhibit A**.

24. The letter states:

# NOTICE OF LEGAL CLAIM

This letter informs you that unless full payment is made directly to Credit Counsel Incorporated within ten (10) working days after the date of this letter, my client may choose to proceed with legal action against your or refer the account to an attorney in your jurisdiction for immediation action.

It is my client's intention to exercise any and all rights provided for enforcement of judgments.

Credit Counsel, Inc. shall proceed with such action immediately when directed to do so by our client.

25. The letter is sent from and signed by a "corporate counsel attorney."

26. This language is threatening, and coercive, and only used with the intent

of scaring Plaintiff into making payment.

27. Specifically, though, this language is false since one year later Defendant

still has not brought legal action against Plaintiff for collection on this account.

28. This language would deceive the least sophisticated consumer into believing that shortly after ten (10) days passed a lawsuit would be filed, when Defendant never had any intention of filing a law suit.

29. As a result of Defendant's false, 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*.

30. 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.

31. 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.

32. 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.

33. Defendants made false and misleading representations when they communicated to Plaintiff and threatened to take legal action when Defendant had no intention of doing so in violation of :

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a) 15 U.S.C. §1692e as the letter makes false, deceptive and misleading representations and threats;

b) 15 U.S.C. §1692e(2) as Defendant is making false representations of the legal status of the debt by threatening to sue when it had no intention of doing so;

c) 15 U.S.C. §1692e(5) in threatening to take legal action that was never intended to be taken as Defendant made threats of immediate suit but, over a year later, had not brought suit; and

d) 15 U.S.C. §1692e(10) as Defendant's false threats of a lawsuit constitute false representations and deceptive means in an attempt to collect a debt.

34. 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.

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

35. 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.

36. 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. § 1692f.

37. Pursuant to 15 U.S.C. §1692f, a debt collector may not use any unfair or unconscionable means in connection with the collection of any debt.

38. Defendant violated this section by threatening the Plaintiff with immediate legal action, when it had no intention to file suit.

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

## **DEMAND FOR TRIAL BY JURY**

40. 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 Alisha Hayes, individually and on behalf of all others

similarly situated demands judgment from Defendant Credit Counsel, Inc., 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: April 26, 2018

Respectfully Submitted,

# MASON LAW GROUP, P.C.

<u>/s/ Jonathan B. Mason</u> Jonathan B. Mason, Esq. GA Bar No. 475659 1100 Peachtree St NE, Ste 200 Atlanta, GA 30309 Phone: (404) 920-8040 Fax: (404) 920-8039 jmason@atlshowbizlaw.com *Attorneys For Plaintiff* 

# **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, this 26th day of April, 2018

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/ Jonathan B. Mason Jonathan B. Mason, Esq. GA Bar No. 475659 **Mason Law Group, P.C.** 1100 Peachtree St., NE Ste 200 Atlanta, GA 30309 Phone: 404-920-8040 Fax 404-920-8039 jmason@atlshowbizlaw.com Case 1:18-cv-01803-CAP-CMS Document 1-1 Filed 04/26/18 Page 1 of 2

# EXHIBIT A

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CREDIT COUNSEL, INC. 1400 NE Miami Gardens Drive, Suite 216 Miami, FL 33179 From the Desk of Corporate Counsel Attorney Kris Gordon Crawford, Esq.

HAYES, ALISHA

05/01/17

Claim of : CONCENTRA MEDICAL CENTERS - GA Balance Due: 3,284.42

### NOTICE OF LEGAL CLAIM

Apparently you have chosen to ignore your obligation to my client Credit Counsel Inc. This letter informs you that unless full payment is made directly to Credit Counsel Incorporated within ten (10) working days after the date of this letter, my client may choose to proceed with legal action against you or refer the account to an attorney in your jurisdiction for immediate action.

It is my client's intention to exercise any and all rights provided for enforcement of judgments.

Credit Counsel, Inc. shall proceed with such action immediately when directed to do so by our client. It is urgent that you pay the balance in full within ten (10) days after the date of receiving this letter.

You should immediately contact the manager at:

Tel. 305-940-6562

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Very truly yours,

Kris Gordon Cravford, Esq. Corporate Counsel Attorney

Credit Counsel, Inc. is a debt collector and this is an attempt to collect a debt. Any information from you will be used for the purpose of collecting this debt.

# JS44 (Rev. 11/16 NDGA ase 1:18-cv-01803-CAP-CYVIL DOVER SHEET Filed 04/26/18 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) Alisha Hayes, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated,		DEFENDANT(S) Credit Counsel, Inc.	
(b) COUNTY OF RESIDENCE OF FIRST LISTED PLAINTIFF Cobb (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)		COUNTY OF RESIDENCE OF FIRST LISTED DEFENDANT	
(c) ATTORNEYS (FIRM NAME, ADDRESS, TELEPHONE NUT E-MAIL ADDRESS) Jonathan B. Mason, Esq. Mason Law Group, P.C. 1100 Peachtree Street, NE, Suite 200 Atlanta, GA 30309 404.920.8040 jmason@atlshowbizlaw.com		ATTORNEYS (IF KNOWN)	
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)	
1 U.S. GOVERNMENT PLAINTIFF       3 FEDERAL QUESTION (U.S. GOVERNMENT NOT A PARTY)         2 U.S. GOVERNMENT DEFENDANT       4 DIVERSITY (INDICATE CITIZENSHIP OF PARTIES IN ITEM III)	PLF       DEF       PLF       DEF         1       1       CITIZEN OF THIS STATE       4       4       INCORPORATED OR PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS IN THIS STATE         2       2       CITIZEN OF ANOTHER STATE       5       5       INCORPORATED AND PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS IN THIS STATE         3       3       CITIZEN OF ANOTHER STATE       6       6       6       FOREIGN NATION		
IV. ORIGIN (PLACE AN "X "IN ONE BOX ONLY) I ORIGINAL PROCEEDING 2 REMOVED FROM 3 REMANDED FROM APPELLATE COURT	4 REINSTATED REOPENED	OR 5 ANOTHER DISTRICT (Specify District) 10 MULTIDISTRICT APPEAL TO DISTRICT JUDGE TRANSFER JUDGE JUDGMENT	
MULTIDISTRICT 8 LITIGATION - DIRECT FILE			
V. CAUSE OF ACTION (CITE THE U.S. CIVIL STATUTE JURISDICTIONAL STATUTES UN 15 U.S.C. 1692 et seq. Fair Debt Collection Pro- collection letter to Plaintiff in violation of the FD	actices Act ("	are filing and write a brief statement of cause - do not cite FDCPA") - Defendant sent a false, deceptive and misleading	
<ul> <li>(IF COMPLEX, CHECK REASON BELOW)</li> <li>1. Unusually large number of parties.</li> <li>2. Unusually large number of claims or defenses.</li> <li>3. Factual issues are exceptionally complex</li> <li>4. Greater than normal volume of evidence.</li> <li>5. Extended discovery period is needed.</li> </ul>	☐ 7. Pend ☐ 8. Mult ☐ 9. Nee	lems locating or preserving evidence ling parallel investigations or actions by government. tiple use of experts. d for discovery outside United States boundaries. tence of highly technical issues and proof.	
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY			
RECEIPT # AMOUNT \$	APPLYIN	G IFP MAG. JUDGE (IFP)	

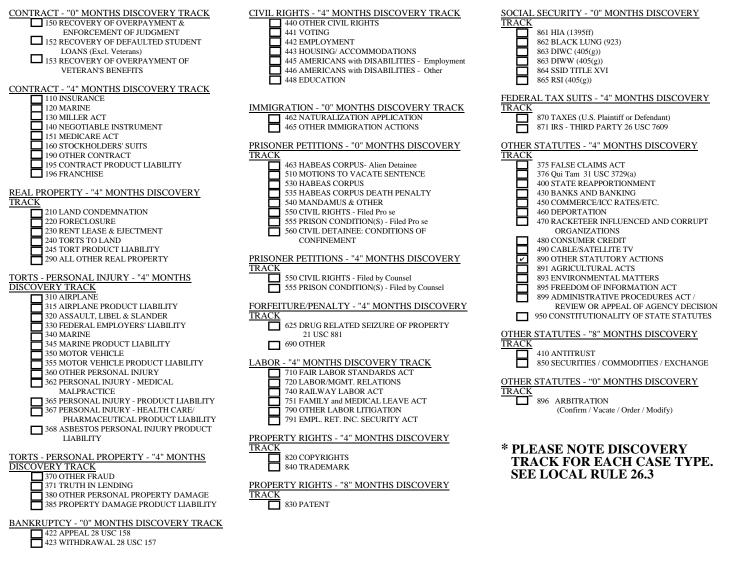
AMOUNT \$	
MAG. JUDGE	
	(Referral)

JUDGE

APPLYING IFP \_\_\_\_\_ NATURE OF SUIT \_\_\_\_\_ MAG. JUDGE (IFP) \_\_\_\_\_ CAUSE OF ACTION\_\_\_\_\_

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### 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>Class Action: Credit Counsel, Inc. Impermissibly Threatened Consumer with Lawsuit</u>