BARSHAY SANDERS, PLLC

100 Garden City Plaza, Suite 500 Garden City, New York 11530 Tel: (516) 203-7600 Fax: (516) 706-5055 Email: ConsumerRights@BarshaySanders.com Attorneys for Plaintiff Our File No.: 113116

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

Sarah Heerbrandt, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated,

Plaintiff,

vs.

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

Docket No:

Retrieval-Masters Creditors Bureau, Inc. d/b/a American Medical Collection Agency,

Defendant.

Sarah Heerbrandt, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated (hereinafter referred to as "*Plaintiff*"), by and through the undersigned counsel, complains, states and alleges against Retrieval-Masters Creditors Bureau, Inc. d/b/a American Medical Collection Agency (hereinafter referred to as "*Defendant*"), as follows:

INTRODUCTION

1. This action seeks to recover for violations of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1692, *et seq.* ("FDCPA").

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

2. This Court has federal subject matter jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 and 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(d).

3. Venue is proper under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b) because a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claim occurred in this Judicial District.

BARSHAY | SANDERS PLLC 100 GARDEN CTY PLAZA, SUITE 500 GARDEN CTY, NEW YORK 11530 4. At all relevant times, Defendant conducted business within the State of New York.

PARTIES

5. Plaintiff Sarah Heerbrandt is an individual who is a citizen of the State of New York residing in Suffolk County, New York.

6. Plaintiff is a "consumer" as defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(3).

7. On information and belief, Defendant Retrieval-Masters Creditors Bureau, Inc. d/b/a American Medical Collection Agency, is a New York Corporation with a principal place of business in Westchester County, New York.

8. Defendant is regularly engaged, for profit, in the collection of debts allegedly owed by consumers.

9. Defendant is a "debt collector" as defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(6).

INDIVIDUAL ALLEGATIONS

10. Defendant alleges Plaintiff owes a debt ("the Debt").

11. The Debt was primarily for personal medical services and is therefore a "debt" as defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(5).

12. Sometime after the incurrence of the Debt, Plaintiff fell behind on payments owed.

13. Thereafter, at an exact time known only to Defendant, the Debt was assigned or otherwise transferred to Defendant for collection.

14. In its efforts to collect the debt, Defendant contacted Plaintiff by letter ("the Letter") dated January 2, 2017. ("<u>Exhibit 1</u>.")

15. The Letter was the initial communication Plaintiff received from Defendant.

16. The Letter is a "communication" as defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(2).

17. 15 U.S.C. § 1692g provides that within five days after the initial communication with a consumer in connection with the collection of any debt, a debt collector shall, unless the information is contained in the initial communication or the consumer has paid the debt, send the consumer a written notice containing certain enumerated information.

18. The written notice must contain the amount of the debt.

19. The written notice must contain the name of the creditor to whom the debt is

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owed.

20. The written notice must contain 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.

21. The written notice must contain a statement that if the consumer notifies the debt collector in writing within the thirty-day period that the debt, or any portion thereof, is disputed, the debt collector will obtain verification of the debt or a copy of a judgment against the consumer and a copy of such verification or judgment will be mailed to the consumer by the debt collector.

22. The written notice must contain 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.

23. A debt collector has the obligation, not just to convey the required information, but also to convey such clearly.

24. Even if a debt collector conveys the required information accurately, the debt collector nonetheless violates the FDCPA if that information is overshadowed or contradicted by other language in the communication.

25. Even if a debt collector conveys the required information accurately, the debt collector nonetheless violates the FDCPA if that information is overshadowed by other collection activities during the 30-day validation period following the communication.

26. 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(b) provides that any collection activities and communication during the 30-day period may not overshadow or be inconsistent with the disclosure of the consumer's right to dispute the debt or request the name and address of the original creditor.

27. A collection activity or communication overshadows or contradicts the validation notice if it would make the "least sophisticated consumer" uncertain or confused as to her rights.

28. Demanding immediate payment without explaining that such demand does not override the consumer's right to dispute the debt or demand validation of the debt is a violation of the FDCPA.

29. Demanding immediate payment without providing transitional language explaining that such demand does not override the consumer's right to dispute the debt or demand validation of the debt is a violation of the FDCPA.

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30. Defendant has demanded Plaintiff make immediate payment during the validation period.

31. The Letter states, in highlighted text bigger than any other text on the page, "IMMEDIATE PAYMENT REQUIRED." (emphasis in original).

32. Defendant demanded Plaintiff make immediate payment during the validation period while placing the required Section 1692g language on the back of the letter.

33. Defendant demanded Plaintiff make immediate payment during the validation period without explaining that such demand does not override the Plaintiff's right to dispute the debt as set forth on the back of the letter.

34. Defendant demanded Plaintiff make immediate payment during the validation period without explaining that such demand does not override the Plaintiff's right to demand validation of the debt as set forth on the back of the letter.

35. Defendant's demand for immediate payment would likely make the least sophisticated consumer uncertain as to her rights.

36. Defendant's demand for immediate payment would likely make the least sophisticated consumer confused as to her rights.

37. Defendant violated § 1692g as Defendant overshadowed the information required to be provided by that Section.

38. Defendant violated § 1692g as Defendant contradicts the information required to be provided by that Section.

CLASS ALLEGATIONS

39. Plaintiff brings this action individually and as a class action on behalf of all persons similarly situated in the State of New York from whom Defendant attempted to collect a consumer debt using a letter substantially the same as the letter used herein, from one year before the date of this Complaint to the present.

40. This action seeks a finding that Defendant's conduct violates the FDCPA, and asks that the Court award damages as authorized by 15 U.S.C. § 1692k.

41. Defendant regularly engages in debt collection.

42. The Class consists of more than 35 persons from whom Defendant attempted to collect delinquent consumer debts using a letter substantially the same as the letter used herein.

BARSHAY | SANDERS PILC 100 GARDEN CTTY PLAZA, SUITE 500 GARDEN CTTY, NEW YORK 11530 43. Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the Class. Common questions of law or fact raised by this class action complaint affect all members of the Class and predominate over any individual issues. Common relief is therefore sought on behalf of all members of the Class. This class action is superior to other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of this controversy.

44. The prosecution of separate actions by individual members of the Class would create a risk of inconsistent or varying adjudications with respect to the individual members of the Class, and a risk that any adjudications with respect to individual members of the Class would, as a practical matter, either be dispositive of the interests of other members of the Class not party to the adjudication, or substantially impair or impede their ability to protect their interests. Defendant has acted in a manner applicable to the Class as a whole such that declaratory relief is warranted.

45. Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect and represent the interests of the Class. The management of the class action proposed is not extraordinarily difficult, and the factual and legal issues raised by this class action complaint will not require extended contact with the members of the Class, because Defendant's conduct was perpetrated on all members of the Class and will be established by common proof. Moreover, Plaintiff has retained counsel experienced in actions brought under consumer protection laws.

JURY DEMAND

46. Plaintiff hereby demands a trial of this action by jury.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests judgment as follows:

a. Certify this action as a class action; and

b. Appoint Plaintiff as Class Representative of the Class, and Plaintiff's attorneys as Class Counsel; and

c. Find that Defendant's actions violate the FDCPA; and

d. Grant damages against Defendant pursuant to 15 U.S.C. $\$ 1692k; and

e. Grant Plaintiff's attorneys' fees pursuant to 15 U.S.C. $\$ 1692k; and

- f. Grant Plaintiff's costs; together with
- g. Such other relief that the Court determines is just and proper.

DATED: August 16, 2017

BARSHAY SANDERS, PLLC

By: <u>/s/ Craig B. Sanders</u> Craig B. Sanders, Esq. 100 Garden City Plaza, Suite 500 Garden City, New York 11530 Tel: (516) 203-7600 Fax: (516) 706-5055 csanders@barshaysanders.com *Attorneys for Plaintiff* Our File No.: 113116



AMERICAN MEDICAL COLLECTION AGENCY

4 Westchester Plaza Suite 110, Elmsford, NY 10523

January 2, 2017

03 L3Q SYT 669 216N	B584424
Pin Number:	1671
(844) 515-262	22

63

Dear Sarah Heerbrandt:

Your account is SERIOUSLY DELINQUENT and we must advise you as follows:

This agency seeks collection of this long overdue bill for services provided by our client, **Quest Diagnostics Incorporated**.

Your debt in the amount of \$52.80 is for laboratory tests ordered by your physician.

Your lack of response suggests you assume responsibility for this debt.

Your account information has been placed with our agency for the purpose of obtaining payment.

You can resolve this matter quickly and easily by sending payment in full without delay. Otherwise, we must inform you that further collection efforts will be pursued.

SEE REVERSE SI	DE FOR IMPORTANT INFORMATION.	L3Q-L - RMCB.WFD - 722435 - 00015380 - 1 or Detach and return this portion with payment using enclosed envelope
Amount D	ue: \$52.80	To pay online: pay.amcaonline.com
Service Provider:	Quest Diagnostics Incorporated	Card #:
Date of Service	January 4, 2016	Client Code: SYT Invoice: 4424 Pin Number: 1671 03 L3Q SYT 669 1671
Pin Number: Name: Street Address: City,State Zip:	Sarah Heerbrandt 46 Meyer Ln Medford, NY 11763-4117	

The disclosures below are required by state or federal law. This is not intended to be a complete statement of all rights consumers may have under state and federal law.

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

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 after receiving this notice, that the debt or any portion thereof is disputed, 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.

A Detach along this edge. A Return the Bottom portion with your check, credit card information or money order. Include your account number, name and address on all correspondence.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

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JS 44 (Rev. 07/16) Case 2:17-cv-04810 Depyment of 2 Files 08/16/17 Page 1 of 2 PageID #: 9

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.)

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I. (a) PLAINTIFFS			DEFEN	DANTS					
SARAH HEERB	RANDT					CREDITORS B	,		
(b) County of Residence of First Listed PlaintiffSUFFOLK				D/B/A AMERICAN MEDICAL COLLECTION AGENCY County of Residence of First Listed Defendant WESTCHESTER					
	XCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF C	ASES)			(IN U.S. P	LAINTIFF CASES C			
			NOTE: IN	LAND CON THE TRACT	DEMNATION OF LAND IN	CASES, USE THE VOLVED.	LOCATION O	F	
(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, A	ddress, and Telephone Numbe	er)	Attorney	s (If Known)					
BARSHAY SAND	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	· NIX 11520							
(516) 203-7600	laza, Ste 500, Garden Ci	ity, NY 11530							
II. BASIS OF JURISDI	CTION (Place an "X" in (One Box Only)	I. CITIZENSH		RINCIPA	L PARTIES (
O 1 U.S. Government	• 3 Federal Question		(For Diversity Cases Or	dy) PT	F DEF		and One I	Box for Defen PIF	ndant) DEF
Plaintiff	(U.S. Government)	Not a Party)	Citizen of This State			Incorporated or Print of Business In T		0 4	
O 2 U.S. Government	O 4 Diversity		Citizen of Another S	State O	2 O 2	Incorporated and P	-	O 5	O 5
Defendant	(Indicate Citizenshi	ip of Parties in Item III)				of Business In A	nother State		
			Citizen or Subject o Foreign Country	fa O	3 O 3	Foreign Nation		O 6	O 6
IV. NATURE OF SUIT			<u> </u>						
CONTRACT		DRTS	FORFEITURE/			KRUPTCY	1	R STATUT	
O 110 Insurance O 120 Marine	PERSONAL INJURY O 310 Airplane	PERSONAL INJURY O 365 Personal Injury -	O 625 Drug Related Property 21		O 422 Appea O 423 Withd		O 375 False O 400 State I		
O 130 Miller Act	O 315 Airplane Product	Product Liability	O 690 Other			C 157	O 410 Antitr	ust	
O 140 Negotiable Instrument O 150 Recovery of Overpayment &	Liability O 320 Assault Libel &	O 367 Health Care/ Pharmaceutical			PROPER	TY RIGHTS	O 430 Banks O 450 Comm		ng
Enforcement of Judgment	Slander	Personal Injury				ights	O 460 Depor		
O 151 Medicare Act	O 330 Federal Employers'	Product Liability O 368 Asbestos Personal				nark	O 470 Racket		
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(Excludes Veterans)	O 345 Marine Product	Liability				SECURITY	O 490 Cable/		
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O 190 Other Contract O 195 Contract Product Liability	Product Liability O 360 Other Personal	O 380 Other Personal Property Damage	Relations O 740 Railway Labo	or Act	O 864 SSID O 865 RSI (4		O 891 Agricu O 893 Enviro		
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	O 362 Personal Injury - Medical Malpractice	Product Liability	Leave Act O 790 Other Labor I	itigation			Act O 896 Arbitr	ation	
REAL PROPERTY	CIVIL RIGHTS	PRISONER PETITIONS	O 791 Employee Re		FEDERA	AL TAX SUITS	0 899 Admin		rocedure
O 210 Land Condemnation O 220 Foreclosure	O 440 Other Civil Rights	Habeas Corpus:	Income Secur	rity Act		(U.S. Plaintiff		eview or A	
O 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment	O 441 Voting O 442 Employment	O 463 Alien Detainee O 510 Motions to Vacate			or De O 871 IRS—	fendant) Third Party	Agen O 950 Consti	cy Decisior	
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	O 446 Amer. w/Disabilities - Other	O 540 Mandamus & Other O 550 Civil Rights	O 465 Other Imr Actions	nigration					
	O 448 Education	O 555 Prison Condition	Actions						
		O 560 Civil Detainee Conditions of							
		Confinement							
V. ORIGIN (Place an "X" in	One Box Only)								
• 1 Original Proceeding O 2 Remo		11	Reinstated or C Reopened	5 Transferred Another D (specify)		O 6 Multidistrict Litigation – Transfer	I	Multidistric Litigation – Direct File	
	Cite the U.S. Civil St	atute under which you are f	iling (<i>Do not cite juri</i>	sdictional sta	tutes unless di	versity): 15 USC §	\$1692		
VI. CAUSE OF ACTIO	N Brief description of cat	1se: 15 USC §1692 Fai	r Debt Collection F	ractices Act	Violation				
VII. REQUESTED IN		S A CLASS ACTION	DEMAND \$			CHECK YES only	y if demanded	in compla	int:
COMPLAINT:	UNDER RULE 2	3, F.R.Cv.P.			JU	RY DEMAND:	• Yes	s O No	
VIII. RELATED CASE IF ANY	2(S)	(See Instructions) JUDGE			DOCK	ET NUMBER			
DATE		SIGNATURE OF ATTOR							
August 16, 2017		/s Crai	g B. Sanders						
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY									
RECEIPT # AN	IOUNT	APPLYING IFP		JUDGE		MAG. JUE	OGE		

Case 2:17-cv-04810 Document 1-2 Filed 08/16/17 Page 2 of 2 PageID #: 10 CERTIFICATION OF ARBITRATION ELIGIBILITY

Local Arbitration Rule 83.10 provides that with certain exceptions, actions seeking money damages only in an amount not in excess of \$150,000, exclusive of interest and costs, are eligible for compulsory arbitration. The amount of damages is presumed to be below the threshold amount unless a certification to the contrary is filed.

I, <u>Craig B. Sanders</u>, counsel for <u>Plaintiff</u>, do hereby certify that the above captioned civil action is ineligible for compulsory arbitration for the following reason(s):

- □ monetary damages sought are in excess of \$150,000, exclusive of interest and costs,
- \Box the complaint seeks injunctive relief,
- \Box 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)

Please list all cases 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) provides that "A civil case is "related" to another civil case for purposes of this guideline when, because of the similarity of facts and legal issues or because the cases arise from the same transactions or events, a substantial saving of judicial resources is likely to result from assigning both cases to the same judge and magistrate judge." Rule 50.3.1 (b) provides that "A civil case shall not be deemed "related" to another civil case merely because the civil case: (A) involves identical legal issues, or (B) involves the same parties." Rule 50.3.1 (c) further provides that "Presumptively, and subject to the power of a judge to determine otherwise pursuant to paragraph (d), civil cases shall not be deemed to be "related" unless both cases are still pending before the court."

NY-E DIVISION OF BUSINESS RULE 50.1(d)(2)

1. Is the civil action being filed in the Eastern District removed from a New York State Court located in Nassau or Suffolk County: <u>NO</u>

If you answered "no" above:
a) Did the events or omissions giving rise to the claim or claims, or a substantial part thereof, occur in Nassau or Suffolk County? <u>YES</u>

b) Did the events or omissions giving rise to the claim or claims, or a substantial part thereof, occur in the Eastern District? YES

If your answer to question 2 (b) is "No," does the defendant (or a majority of the defendants, if there is more than one) reside in Nassau or Suffolk County, or, in an interpleader action, does the claimant (or a majority of the claimants, if there is more than one) reside in Nassau or Suffolk County?

(Note: A corporation shall be considered a resident of the County in which it has the most significant contacts).

BAR ADMISSION

I am currently admitted in the Eastern District of New York and currently a member in good standing of the bar of this court.

Are you currently 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:	/s Craig B. Sanders	

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

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

Sarah Heerbrandt, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated)))
<i>Plaintiff(s)</i>)
v.) Civil Action No.
Retrieval-Masters Creditors Bureau, Inc. d/b/a American Medical Collection Agency)

Defendant(s)

SUMMONS IN A CIVIL ACTION

To: (Defendant's name and address)

Retrieval-Masters Creditors Bureau, Inc. d/b/a American Medical Collection Agency American Collection Agency , 4 Westchester Plaza, Suite 10 Elmsford, New York 10523

A lawsuit has been filed against you.

Within 21 days after service of this summons on you (not counting the day you received it) – or 60 days if you are the United States, or a United States agency, or an officer or employee of the United States described in Fed. R. Civ. P. 12 (a)(2) or (3) – you must serve on the plaintiff an answer to the attached complaint or a motion under Rule 12 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. The answer or motion must be served on the plaintiff or plaintiff's attorney, whose name and address are:

BARSHAY SANDERS PLLC 100 GARDEN CITY PLAZA, SUITE 500 GARDEN CITY, NY 11530

If you fail to respond, judgment by default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint. You also must file your answer or motion with the court.

CLERK OF COURT

Date: _____

Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: <u>Debt Collector Overshadows Consumer's Right to Dispute, Suit Says</u>