Case 2:17-cv-03118-MAK Document 1 Filed 07/13/17 Page 1 of 13 CIVIL COVER SHEET

JS 44 (Rev. 07/16)

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 do	cket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCT	TONS ON NEXT PAGE O	F THIS FO	RM.)			
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS Reneisha Knight, on behalf of herself and all other similarly situated consumers				DEFENDANTS Midland Credit Mar	nagement		
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Philadelphia County (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)				County of Residence of NOTE: IN LAND CO	<i>(IN U.S. PL</i> NDEMNATIO	AINTIFF CASES ON ON CASES, USE TH	
(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, A Alexander R. Ferrante, E 261 Old York Road, Suite 215-872-5127	sq., Gold & Ferrante, l	P.C.		Attorneys (If Known)			
II. BASIS OF JURISDI	CTION (Place an "X" in O	ne Box Only)	III. C		RINCIPA	L PARTIES (Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff
				(For Diversity Cases Only) PT	F DEF		and One Box for Defendant) PTF DEF
1 U.S. Government Plaintiff	nent 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party)		Citiz	en of This State		Incorporated or Prin of Business In Th	ncipal Place 🗍 4 🗐 4
2 U.S. Government Defendant	☐ 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizensh	ip of Parties in Item III)	Citiz	en of Another State	2 0 2	Incorporated and Proof Business In A	
				en or Subject of a Doreign Country	3 🗇 3	Foreign Nation	0 6 0 6
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☐ 110 Insurance ☐ 120 Marine	PERSONAL INJURY 310 Airplane	PERSONAL INJUR 365 Personal Injury -	. 6	25 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881	☐ 423 With		☐ 376 Qui Tam (31 USC
130 Miller Act	☐ 315 Airplane Product	Product Liability	□ 6	90 Other	28 U	SC 157	3729(a))
140 Negotiable Instrument	Liability	367 Health Care/	l l		- DEGEL	e samente e e e	☐ 400 State Reapportionment ☐ 410 Antitrust
☐ 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment	☐ 320 Assault, Libel & Slander	Pharmaceutical Personal Injury			☐ 820 Copy		1 430 Banks and Banking
☐ 151 Medicare Act	330 Federal Employers'	Product Lizbility			☐ 830 Paten	t	1 450 Commerce
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(Excludes Veterans) ☐ 153 Recovery of Overpayment	☐ 345 Marine Product Liability	Liability PERSONAL PROPE		10 Fair Labor Standards	□ 861 HIA		2 480 Consumer Credit
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☐ 160 Stockholders' Suits	☐ 355 Motor Vehicle	371 Truth in Lending	07	20 Labor/Management	863 DIW	C/DIWW (405(g))	☐ 850 Securities/Commodities/ Exchange
☐ 190 Other Contract ☐ 195 Contract Product Liability	Product Liability 360 Other Personal	☐ 380 Other Personal Property Damage		Relations 40 Railway Labor Act	365 RSI		890 Other Statutory Actions
196 Franchise	Injury	☐ 385 Property Damage		51 Family and Medical			☐ 891 Agricultural Acts
	362 Personal Injury -	Product Liability		Leave Act			☐ 893 Environmental Matters ☐ 895 Freedom of Information
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220 Foreclosure	☐ 441 Voting	☐ 463 Alien Detainee	- 1			efendant)	☐ 899 Administrative Procedure
230 Rent Lease & Ejectment	442 Employment 443 Housing/	510 Motions to Vacat	e		Ø 871 IRS−	-Third Party SC 7609	Act/Review or Appeal of Agency Decision
 240 Torts to Land 245 Tort Product Liability 	Accommodations	Sentence 530 General			20,0	ac 7007	950 Constitutionality of
290 All Other Real Property	☐ 445 Amer. w/Disabilities -	☐ 535 Death Penalty		IMMIGRATION			State Statutes
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	Unfair debt colle						
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:	CHECK IF THIS UNDER RULE 2	S IS A CLASS ACTIO 23, F.R.Cv.P.	Ň I	DEMAND S		HECK YES only URY DEMAND:	if demanded in complaint:
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RECEIPT# A	MOUNT	APPLYING IFP		JUDGE		MAG. JUI	JGE

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

RENEISHA KNIGHT, on behalf of herself and all other similarly situated consumers,) Case No.:
Plaintiff,))
vs.) CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT
MIDLAND CREDIT MANAGEMENT INC.,	ý)
Defendant.	Ś
·)

Plaintiff, Reneisha Knight (hereinafter "Plaintiff"), on behalf of herself and all other similarly situated consumers, by and through undersigned counsel, hereby alleges against Midland Credit Management, Inc. (hereinafter "Defendant"), as follows:

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PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

1. This is an action for damages arising from Defendant's violations of the Fair Debt Collections Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. §1692 et seq. (hereinafter "FDCPA").

JURSIDICTION AND VENUE

- 2. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1331 and 13 U.S.C. §1367.
- 3. Venue is proper in this district under 28 U.S.C §1391(b)

PARTIES

4. Plaintiff is a natural person, who at all relevant times has resided in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and is a "consumer" as the phrase is defined and applied under 15 U.S.C. §1692(a) of the FDCPA.

5. Defendant is a corporation doing business in the State of California, with its corporate address as 2365 Northside Drive, Suite 300, San Diego, California 92108 and is a "debt collector" as the phrase is defined and applied under 15 U.S.C. §1692(a) of the FDCPA in that they regularly attempt to collect on debts primarily incurred for personal, family or household purposes.

FACTUAL STATEMENT

- 6. On or about July 20, 2016, Defendant sent Plaintiff the letter attached as Exhibit A, presenting the "current balance" as \$944.08, for a personal credit card bill from Capital One.
- 7. Said personal bill was a debt incurred for personal, family or household purposes and not for business purposes.
- 8. Exhibit A is false, deceptive, and misleading given Defendant's placement of ambiguous language and the resulting multiple interpretations of the letter that follow.
- 9. The collection letter states the following:

We are offering you 40% OFF your balance to help you eliminate your debt while saving money. Midland Credit Management will help you put this debt burden behind you. Call us today to pay off your account, and regain your financial free-dom!

After receiving your final payment, we will consider the account paid*.

- 10. To the right of this language, Defendant actually provides Plaintiff with three options for payment:
 - a. Option 1
 - i. 40% off if paid within 20 days
 - b. Option 2
 - i. 20% off if paid over 6 months
 - c. Option 3

- i. Monthly payments as low as \$50 a month
- 11. Along the bottom, the letter states "*if you pay your full balance, we will report your account as Paid in Full. If you pay less than your full balance, we will report your account as Paid in Full for less than the full balance."
- 12. Under the FDCPA, collection letters are to be judged from the standard of the least sophisticated consumer. If a letter has multiple interpretations, more than one of which are reasonable, the collection letter is confusing and is a violation of the FDCPA.
- 13. The above language provided by Defendant has many different material interpretations—the consumer is left unsure what amount will result in the new reporting offered by Defendant.
- 14. Under one reasonable interpretation, the least sophisticated consumer believes Defendant will only report "Paid in Full for Less than the full balance" after the consumer has accepted Defendant's Option 1, the 40% discount. This belief stems from the fact that only the 40% is disclosed within the text of the letter, and the asterisk that is arguably associated with the bottom credit reporting line is just below the 40% offer. Accordingly, under this belief, the least sophisticated consumer must make one lump sum payment to receive the beneficial credit reporting.
- 15. Another reasonable interpretation of the least sophisticated consumer is that the Defendant will report "Paid in Full for Less than the full balance" for any of the three options provided by the Defendant. This interpretation is bolstered by the presentation of the letter which goes to suggest that the three options are provided to the consumer and either of the three options will resolve the consumer's debt, and allow the consumer to receive the beneficial credit reporting.

- 16. Yet another reasonable interpretation of the least sophisticated consumer is the plain reading of final sentence "if you pay your full balance, we will report your account as Paid in Full. If you pay less than your full balance, we will report your account as Paid in Full for less than the full balance." The least sophisticated consumer may read this statement and believe that any partial payment may result in the account reporting as "Paid in Full for less than the full balance." In other words, the consumer views the letter and interprets it to say that no matter the amount he or she pays Defendant will report it as Paid in Full for less than full the balance—because that is the exact wording of the letter. Yet in fact, this is false and misleading because Defendant will not mark the debt as Paid in Full for less than the full balance if the consumer only pays \$100. This interpretation is furthered by Defendant's open ended and ambiguous Option 3. This option merely states that the consumer may make monthly payments of \$50, but does not disclose how much money would need to be paid on this plan in order for the credit reporting to change.
- 17. Defendant does not provide for any other clarification for this reporting statement throughout its uniform letter, and does not make clear that only a certain amount paid, will entitle the consumer to receive a credit reporting of Paid in Full for less than the full balance.
- 18. Upon information and belief, Defendant is intentionally providing this vague reporting language to induce payment. This false language directly impacts whether and how much the consumer will pay to Defendant to resolve the debt.

CLASS ACTION ALLEGATIONS

The Class

- 19. Plaintiff brings this as a class action pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 23.
- 20. Plaintiff seeks certification of the following classes, initially defined as follows:

<u>Class:</u> All consumers with a Pennsylvania address that have received collection letters from Defendant concerning debts for Capital One Bank N.A. used primarily for personal, household, or family purposes within one year prior to the filing of this complaint that provide deceptive reporting language.

21. Excluded from the Class is Defendant herein, and any person, firm, trust, corporation, or other entity related to or affiliated with the defendant, including, without limitation, persons who are officers, directors, employees, associates or partners of Defendant.

Numerosity

- 22. Upon information and belief, Defendant has sent collections letters in attempt to collect a debt to hundreds if not thousands of consumers Pennsylvania, each of which violates the FDCPA. The members of the Class, therefore, are believed to be so numerous that joinder of all members is impracticable.
- 23. The letters sent by Defendant, and received by the Class, are to be evaluated by the objective standard of the hypothetical "least sophisticated consumer."
- 24. The exact number and identities of the Class members are unknown at this time and can only be ascertained through discovery. Identification of the Class members is a matter capable of ministerial determination from Defendant's records.

Common Questions of Law and Fact

25. There are questions of law and fact common to the class that predominates over any questions affecting only individual Class members. These common questions of law and fact include, without limitation: (i) whether Defendant violated various provisions of the FDCPA; (ii) whether the Plaintiff and the Class have been injured by the conduct of Defendant; (iii) whether the Plaintiff and the Class have sustained damages and are entitled to restitution as a result of Defendants wrongdoing and, if so, what is the proper measure and appropriate statutory formula

to be applied in determining such damages and restitution; and (iv) whether the Plaintiff and the Class are entitled to declaratory and/or injunctive relief.

Typicality

26. The Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the class members. Plaintiff and all members of the Plaintiff's Class defined in this complaint have claims arising out of the Defendants common uniform course of conduct complained of herein. Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the Class, and Plaintiff has no interests adverse or antagonistic to the interests of other members of the Class.

Protecting the Interests of the Class Members

- 27. Plaintiff will fairly and adequately represent the Class members' interests, in that the Plaintiff's counsel is experienced and, further, anticipates no impediments in the pursuit and maintenance of the class action as sought herein.
- 28. Neither the Plaintiff nor his counsel have any interests, which might cause them not to vigorously pursue the instant class action lawsuit.

Proceeding Via Class Action is Superior and Advisable

- 29. A class action is superior to other methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of the claims herein asserted, this being specifically envisioned by Congress as a principal means of enforcing the FDCPA, as codified by 15 U.S.C.§ 1692(k).
- 30. The members of the Class are generally unsophisticated individuals, whose rights will not be vindicated in the absence of a class action.
- 31. Prosecution of separate actions by individual members of the Class would create the risk of inconsistent or varying adjudications resulting in the establishment of inconsistent or varying standards for the parties.

- 32. 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's 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.
- 33. Depending on the outcome of further investigation and discovery, Plaintiff may, at the time of class certification motion, seek to certify one or more classes only as to particular issues pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(c)(4).
- 34. A class action will permit a large number of similarly situated persons to prosecute their common claims in a single forum simultaneously, efficiently, and without the duplication of effort and expense that numerous individual actions would engender. Class treatment also will permit the adjudication of relatively small claims by many Class members who could not otherwise afford to seek legal redress for the wrongs complained of herein.
- 35. Absent a class action, the Class members will continue to suffer losses borne from Defendants breaches of Class members' statutorily protected rights as well as monetary damages, thus allowing and enabling: (a) Defendants conduct to proceed and; (b) Defendants to further enjoy the benefit of its ill-gotten gains.

Defendants have acted, and will act, on grounds generally applicable to the entire Class, thereby making appropriate a final injunctive relief or corresponding declaratory relief with respect to the Class as a whole.

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

36. Plaintiff repeats the allegations contained in the above paragraphs and incorporates them as if specifically set forth at length herein.

- 37. Defendant's false and deceptive representations to Plaintiff violate the below provisions of the FDCPA.
- 38. Section 1692e provides:

§ 1692e. False or misleading representations

A debt collector may not use any false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of any debt. Without limiting the general application of the foregoing, the following conduct is a violation of this section: ...

- (10) The use of any false representation or deceptive means to collect or attempt to collect any debt or to obtain information concerning a consumer.
- 39. Section 1692f provides:

§ 1692f. Unfair Practices

A debt collector may not use unfair or unconscionable means to collect or attempt to collect any debt. . . .

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, Reneisha Knight, respectfully requests that this Court do the following for the benefit of Plaintiff:

- A. Certify the class described herein and appoint Plaintiff as Lead Plaintiff, and Plaintiff's Counsel as Lead Counsel;
- B. Enter judgment against Defendant for statutory damages pursuant to the FDCPA;
- C. Enter judgment for injunctive relief stopping Defendant from using letters similar to Exhibit A;

- D. Award costs and reasonable attorneys' fees;
- E. Grant such other and further relief as may be just and proper.

JURY TRIAL DEMAND

40. Plaintiff demands a jury trial on all issues so triable.

Dated this 10th of July, 2017

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/ Alexander R. Ferrante, Esq.

Alexander R. Ferrante, Esq.

Gold & Ferrante, P.C. 261 Old York Road

Suite 526

Jenkintown, PA 19046

Tel: (215)- 872-5127 aferrante1@verizon.net **Midland Credit** Management, Inc.

2365 Northside Drive, Sulte 308, San Diego, CA 92108

07-20-2016

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P13T381

001. Reneisha L Branch

Did y u forg t somethi g?

MCM Account Number

Current Balance

Discount

0461

\$944.08

40% OFF

Original Creditor..... CAPITAL ONE BANK (USA), N.A.

Original Account...... 5178059168450758

Current Owner...... MIDLAND FUNDING LLC

CALL US TODAY! (800) 282-2644

Hours of Operation:

M - Th: 5:00am - 9:00pm PST; Fri: 5:00am - 4:30pm PST; Sat: 5:00am - 4:30pm PST; Sun: 5:00am - 9:00pm PST

We can't change the past, but we can help with your future.

RE: Capital One Bank (USA), N.A.

Reneisha L Branch, mistakes can happen to anyone. Midland Credit Management believes that everyone deserves a second chance. Call (800) 282-2644 or visit us online at

www.midlandcreditonline.com by 08-19-2016 to accept one of these discounts.

We are offering you 40% OFF your balance to help you eliminate your debt while saving money.

Midland Credit Management will help you put this debt burden behind you. Call us today to pay off your account, and regain your financial free-dom!

After receiving your final payment, we will consider the account paid*.

Sincerely,

Tim Bolin, Division Manager

KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

Option 1

40% OFF

Payment Due Date: 08-19-2016

Option 2

20% OFF

Over 6 Months

Option 3

Monthly Payments As Low As: \$50 per month



(800) 282-2644



Pay Online at: www.midlandcreditonline.com



Mail: **Payment Certificate**

*If you pay your full balance, we will report your account as **Paid in Full.** If you pay less than your full balance, we will report your account as **Paid in Full for less than the full balance**.



Case 2:17-cv-03118 DPA PROPERTY PROPERTY PAGE 12 of 13

FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA — DESIGNATION FORM to b	e used by counsel to indicate the category of the case for the purpose of
assignment to appropriate calendar.	1 DI PLILLIE PAIRCE
Address of Plaintiff:	rlan Kd. I Miladelphia 11/11/13
Address of Defendant: Midland Cred & Minagemont, 23	651 Norths. de Drive Juite 300
Place of Accident, Incident or Transaction: Philadelphia PA	San Diajo, CA 92108
(Use Reverse Side For A	(dditional Space)
Does this civil action involve a nongovernmental corporate party with any parent corporation a	and any publicly held corporation owning 10% or more of its stock?
(Attach two copies of the Disclosure Statement Form in accordance with Fed.R.Civ.P. 7.1(a)	
Does this case involve multidistrict litigation possibilities?	Yeso No 🗸
RELATED CASE, IF ANY: Nohe	·
Case Number: Judge	Date Terminated:
Civil cases are deemed related when yes is answered to any of the following questions:	
1. Is this case related to property included in an earlier numbered suit pending or within one ye	ear previously terminated action in this court?
	Yes□ No□
2. Does this case involve the same issue of fact or grow out of the same transaction as a prior action in this court?	suit pending or within one year previously terminated
action in this court.	Yes No No
3. Does this case involve the validity or infringement of a patent already in suit or any earlier of	
terminated action in this court?	Yes□ No.
4. Is this case a second or successive habeas corpus, social security appeal, or pro se civil righ	its case filed by the same individual?
4. Is this case a second of successive national corpus, social section, appear, or pro-section regu	Yes□ No□
CIVIL: (Place / in ONE CATEGORY ONLY)	
A. Federal Question Cases:	B. Diversity Jurisdiction Cases:
1. Indemnity Contract, Marine Contract, and All Other Contracts	1. □ Insurance Contract and Other Contracts
2. □ FELA	2. □ Airplane Personal Injury
3. □ Jones Act-Personal Injury	3. □ Assault, Defamation
4. □ Antitrust	4. Marine Personal Injury
5. D Patent	5. D Motor Vehicle Personal Injury
6. Labor-Management Relations	6. □ Other Personal Injury (Please specify)
7. D Civil Rights	7. □ Products Liability
8. Habeas Corpus	8. Products Liability — Asbestos
9. □ Securities Act(s) Cases	9. □ All other Diversity Cases
10. □ Social Security Review Cases	(Please specify)
11. All other Federal Question Cases (Please specify)	
	PIETC A TYON
ARBITRATION CERT	
I. Alexander K-ferrante counsel of record do hereby cert	
Pursuant to Local Civil Rule 53.2, Section 3(c)(2), that to the best of my knowledge and \$150,000.00 exclusive of interest and costs;	d benef, the damages recoverable in this civil action case exceed the sum of
□ Relief other than monetary damages is sought.	
*110/2017 () 0 1/2 x	40381
DATE: DI COMPANIE Attorney-at-Law	Attorney I.D.#
NOTE: A trial de novo will be a trial by jury only if the	nere has been compliance with F.R.C.P. 38.
I certify that, to my knowledge, the within case is not related to any case now pending of except as noted above.	r within one year previously terminated action in this court
PATE HISTICIT ON	45381
Attorney-at-Law	Attorney I.D.#

CIV. 609 (5/2012)

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

CASE MANAGEMENT TRACK DESIGNATION FORM

<u>Felephone</u>	FAX Number	E-Mail Address			
1-215-872-5127	1-215-885-5283	aferrante1@verizon.net			
Date	Attorney-at-law	Attorney for			
July 10, 2017	Alexander R. Ferrante	Reneisha Knight			
(f) Standard Management –	Cases that do not fall into ar	ny one of the other tracks.	()		
(e) Special Management – C commonly referred to as the court. (See reverse si management cases.)	ases that do not fall into trac complex and that need speci de of this form for a detailed	ial or intense management by	(x)		
(d) Asbestos – Cases involvi exposure to asbestos.			()		
		itration under Local Civil Rule 53.2.	()		
and Human Services den	ying plaintiff Social Security		()		
a) Habeas Corpus – Cases brought under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 through § 2255.					
SELECT ONE OF THE FO	LLOWING CASE MANA	AGEMENT TRACKS:			
plaintiff shall complete a Cas filing the complaint and serve side of this form.) In the e designation, that defendant s the plaintiff and all other par to which that defendant belie	se Management Track Design a copy on all defendants. (Some vent that a defendant does thall, with its first appearance ties, a Case Management Trackers the case should be assigned.		me of verse said ve on		
-	,	NO.			
v. Midland Credit Management, In	:	NO			
Reneisha Knight, on behalf of hasimilarly situated consumers	nerself and all .	CIVIL ACTION			

(Civ. 660) 10/02

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: <u>Midland Credit Management Accused of Vague Debt Reporting Conditions</u>