UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA- TAMPA DIVISION

Jaramail Lee, individually and on	behalf of all others
similarly situated;	
	Plaintiff,

-v.-

Hunter Warfield, Inc.

John Does 1-25.

Defendant(s).

8:19 cv 164 T 30 AAR

Civil Action No:

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Plaintiff Jaramail Lee (hereinafter, "Plaintiff"), brings this Class Action Complaint by and through his attorneys, against Defendant Hunter Warfield, Inc. (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") 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

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"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. § 1331</u>, <u>15 U.S.C. § 1692</u> et. seq. and <u>28 U.S.C. § 2201</u>. If applicable, the Court also has pendent jurisdiction over the State law claims in this action pursuant to <u>28 U.S.C. § 1367(a)</u>.
- 4. Venue is proper in this judicial district pursuant to <u>28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(2)</u> as this is where the majority of acts and omissions surrounding this claim occurred.

NATURE OF THE ACTION

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

PARTIES

- 7. Plaintiff is a resident of the State of North Carolina, County of Mecklenburg, residing at 13023 William Harvey Court, Charlotte, NC, 28278.
- 8. Defendant Hunter Warfield, Inc. is a "debt collector" as the phrase is defined in 15 U.S.C. § 1692(a)(6) and used in the FDCPA, and is located at 4620 Woodland Corporate Blvd, Tampa, Florida, 33614.
- 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

- Plaintiffs bring 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;
 - to whom Defendant Hunter Warfield, Inc. sent a collection letter attempting to collect a consumer debt;
 - c. on behalf of Retreat at McAlpine;
 - d. that falsely stated that interest is continuously accruing, when in fact interest was no longer accruing at the time;
 - e. 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.
- 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 her 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.
- 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 her counsel, have any interests which might cause them not to vigorously pursue the instant class action lawsuit.
- e. <u>Superiority:</u> A class action is superior to the other available means for the fair and efficient adjudication of this controversy because individual joinder of all members would be impracticable. Class action treatment will permit a large number of similarly situated persons to prosecute their common claims in a single forum efficiently and without unnecessary duplication of effort and expense that individual actions would engender.
- 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 January 22, 2018, an obligation was allegedly incurred to Retreat at McAlpine (hereinafter "Retreat").
- 22. The Retreat obligation arose out of transactions involving money, property, insurance or services.
 - 23. The alleged Retreat obligation is a "debt" as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(5).
 - 24. Retreat is a "creditor" as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(4).
- 25. Retreat, or a subsequent owner of the debt, contracted with the Defendant Hunter Warfield 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.

Violation - January 22, 2018 Collection Letter

- 27. On or about January 22, 2018, the Defendant sent Plaintiff a collection letter (the "Letter") regarding the alleged debt owed to Retreat. See January 22, 2018 Collection Letter, attached hereto at Exhibit A.
 - 28. The top of the Letter states the current balance is \$3943.13.
 - 29. Additionally, the collection letter contains an offer to settle the debt.
 - 30. The middle of the letter goes on to state:

"If you fail to take advantage of this offer, interest will accrue making your payoff great than the amount set forth above."

- 31. Defendant is aware that during the collection of this debt the balance will not vary at all and stating that it may increase is merely a deceptive collection tactic.
- 32. This language is confusing to Plaintiff since it is unclear as to whether or not the account was currently accruing interest.
- 33. Plaintiff incurred an informational injury as Defendant deceptively stated that the account was accruing interest, when in fact it was not.
- 34. As a result of Defendant's deceptive, misleading and unfair debt collection practices, Plaintiff has been damaged.

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

- 37. 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.
 - 38. 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).
- 39. 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.

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 Jaramial Lee, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated, demands judgment from Defendant Hunter Warfield, Inc as follows:

- Declaring that this action is properly maintainable as a Class Action and certifying
 Plaintiff as Class representative, and Justin Zeig, 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: January 22, 2019

Respectfully Submitted,

ZEIG DAW FIRM, LLC

Justin Zeig, Esq. FL Bar No. 112306 3475 Sheridan Street, Suite 310 Hollywood, FL 33021

Telephone: 754-217-3084
Fax: 954-272-7807
justin@zeiglawfirm.com
Attorneys for Plaintiff

EXHIBIT A

RETREAT AT MCALPINE TIHWARDI PO Box 1280 Oaks PA 19456-1280 ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED 01/22/2018 í. ֈֈույիայունակարարկարինինիներինինումիրական \$3,934.13 JARAMIAL LEE 13023 William Harvey Ct Charlotte NC 28278-7681 \$3,934.13 RESOLUTION OFFER For a limited time, you can resolve your account for the reduced amount of \$1,967.06. This is a 50% SAVINGS!! Pay online with check or credit card at: www.payhwi.com. Paying online allows you the ability of paying when it's convenient for you. Or, contact a representative at 844-486-8729 for details or questions regarding this offer.

Pay now and SAVE!!!!

Payment must be received within 30 days from the date of this letter. We are not obligated to renew this offer. If more than 30 days have passed, please contact our office to see if the offer is still valid.

If you fail to take advantage of this offer, interest will accrue making your payoff greater than the amount set forth above.

THIS COMMUNICATION IS FROM A DEBT COLLECTOR. THIS IS AN ATTEMPT TO COLLECT A DEBT. ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE.

SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR IMPORTANT INFORMATION.

Sincerely, Ana Ventura Hunter Warfield, Inc.

Pay on-line at www.payhwi.com.	You will need your Account Number	and PIN Code

Hunter Warfield can be reached at (866) 494-9902; if you are a New York City resident please call 866-494-7360. Hours of operation Mon-Fri 8am to 5pm EST

1.3 Pay by Mail by sending your check, money order, certified funds or credit card information along with this remittance stub.
IF PAYING BY CREDIT CARD OR CHECK, FILL OUT BELOW - CHECK METHOD OF PAYMENT

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4620 Woodland Corporate Blvd Tampa, FL 33614

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JS 44 (Rev. 06/17)

CIVIL COVER SHEET

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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Justin Zeig Esq Zeig La	w Firm LLC									
3475 Sheridan St, Su ite Phone: 754-217-3084	310, Hollywood, Florid	da 33021								
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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 Alleges Hunter Warfield Misrepresented Consumer's Debt Amount in Letter</u>