## UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

WILLIAM MARCHAN, on behalf of himself and all others similarly situated,

Plaintiffs,

-against-

RETRIEVAL-MASTERS CREDITOR'S BUREAU, INC., a/k/a AMERICAN MEDICAL COLLECTION AGENCY,

Defendant.

CIVIL ACTION

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

AND

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Plaintiff WILLIAM MARCHAN (hereinafter, "Plaintiff"), a New York resident, brings this action complaint by and through his attorneys, Joseph H. Mizrahi Law, P.C., against Defendant RETRIEVAL-MASTERS CREDITOR'S BUREAU, INC., a/k/a AMERICAN MEDICAL COLLECTION AGENCY (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 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 "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 under 28 U.S.C. § 1331, 15 U.S.C. § 1692 *et seq.* and 28 U.S.C. § 2201. If applicable, the Court also has pendent jurisdiction over the 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).

#### NATURE OF THE ACTION

- 5. Plaintiff brings this class action on behalf of a class of New York consumers seeking redress for Defendant's illegal practices, in connection with the collection of a debt allegedly owed by Plaintiff in violation of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1692, et seq. ("FDCPA").
- 6. Defendant's actions violated § 1692 *et seq*. of Title 15 of the United States Code, commonly referred to as the "FDCPA," which prohibits debt collectors from engaging in abusive, deceptive and unfair practices.
- 7. Plaintiff is seeking damages, and declaratory and injunctive relief.

#### **PARTIES**

- 8. Plaintiff is a natural person and a resident of the State of New York, and is a "Consumer" as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692(a)(3).
- 9. Defendant is a collection agency with its principal office located in Elmsford, New York.

- 10. 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.
- 11. Defendant is a "debt collector," as defined under the FDCPA under 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(6).

#### **CLASS ALLEGATIONS**

- 12. Plaintiff brings claims, pursuant to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (hereinafter "FRCP")
  Rule 23, individually and on behalf of the following nationwide consumer class (the "Class"):
  - All New York consumers from whom Defendant improperly required a dispute to be in writing in violation of 15 U.S.C. §1692 et seq.
  - The Class period begins one year to the filing of this Action.
- 13. The Class satisfies all the requirements of Rule 23 of the FRCP for maintaining a class action:
  - Upon information and belief, the Class is so numerous that joinder of all members
    is impracticable because there are hundreds and/or thousands of persons whom
    Defendant has improperly denied the right to dispute a debt in violation of
    specific provisions of the FDCPA.
  - There are questions of law and fact which are common to the Class and which
    predominate over questions affecting any individual Class member. These
    common questions of law and fact include, without limitation:
    - a. Whether Defendant violated various provisions of the FDCPA;
    - b. Whether Plaintiff and the Class have been injured by Defendant's conduct;
    - c. Whether Plaintiff and the Class have sustained damages and are entitled to restitution as a result of Defendant's wrongdoing and if so, what is the proper measure and appropriate statutory formula to be applied in determining such damages and restitution; and

- d. Whether Plaintiff and the Class are entitled to declaratory and/or injunctive relief.
- Plaintiff's claims are typical of the Class, which all arise from the same operative facts and are based on the same legal theories.
- Plaintiff has no interest adverse or antagonistic to the interest of the other members of the Class.
- Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interest of the Class and has retained experienced and competent attorneys to represent the Class.
- A Class Action is superior to other methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of the claims herein asserted. Plaintiff anticipates that no unusual difficulties are likely to be encountered in the management of this class action.
- A Class Action will permit large numbers of similarly situated persons to prosecute their common claims in a single forum simultaneously and without the duplication of effort and expense that numerous individual actions would engender. Class treatment will also 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. Absent a Class Action, class members will continue to suffer losses of statutory protected rights as well as monetary damages. If Defendant's conduct is allowed proceed to without remedy they will continue to reap and retain the proceeds of their ill-gotten gains.
- Defendant has acted on grounds generally applicable to the entire Class, thereby
  making appropriate final injunctive relief or corresponding declaratory relief
  with respect to the Class as a whole.

#### **ALLEGATIONS OF FACT**

- 14. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "13" herein with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.
- 15. Upon information and belief, Defendant, on behalf of a third-party, began efforts to collect an alleged consumer debt from Plaintiff.
- 16. Defendant was attempting to collect on Plaintiff's purportedly overdue account Placed with Defendant for collection.
- 17. In an effort to begin collecting on this debt, Defendant reported this debt to the credit reporting agencies causing it to be listed on Plaintiff's credit report.
- 18. Thereafter, on or around August 3, 2017, Plaintiff called Defendant to inquire about the alleged debt.
- 19. A representative of Defendant answered the phone and identified herself as "Liz."
- 20. Plaintiff stated that he disagreed with the balance and wanted to dispute the debt.
- 21. In response, Defendant stated that "you could dispute it [but] you have to have a reason for the dispute."
- 22. After Plaintiff stated his reason for disputing the debt, he asked whether he can dispute it on the phone or if he instead had to send a letter, to which Defendant responded "Both...its company policy."
- 23. Plaintiff thereafter became confused as to his rights and ended the phone call.
- 24. As set forth in the following Counts Defendant violated the FDCPA.

# First Count 15 U.S.C. §1692e et seq. False and Misleading Representations

- 25. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "24" herein with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.
- 26. Defendant's debt collection efforts attempted and/or directed towards Plaintiff violated various provisions of the FDCPA, including but not limited to § 1692(e) by using false, deceptive, and misleading representations in connection with the collection of a debt.
- 27. Defendant violated said section by not accepting Plaintiff's dispute over the phone.
- 28. Defendant further violated same by falsely stating that in order to dispute the debt, Plaintiff would also have to send something in writing.
- 29. The FDCPA allows the consumer to orally dispute a debt.<sup>1</sup>
- 30. The FDCPA allows the consumer to orally dispute a debt for no reason at all.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> It is well settled that § 1692g(a)(3) does not impose a writing requirement on a consumer., See. Register v. Reiner, Reiner & Bendett, P.C., 488 F.Supp.2d 143 (D.Conn. 2007), Jerman v. Carlisle, McNellie, Rini, Kramer & Ulrich, 464 F.Supp.2d 720 (N.D. Ohio 2006), Baez v. Wagner & Hunt, P.A., 442 F.Supp.2d 1273 (S.D.Fla. 2006), Turner v. Shenandoah Legal Group, P.C., No. 3:06CV045, 2006 WL 1685698 (E.D. Va. 2006), Vega v. Credit Bureau Enters., No. CIVA02CV1550, 2005 WL 711657 (E.D.N.Y. Mar. 29, 2005), Nasca v. GC Servs. Ltd. P'ship, No 01CIV10127, 2002 WL 31040647 (S.D.N.Y. Sept. 12, 2002), In re Risk Mgmt. Alternatives, Inc., Fair Debt Collection Practices Act Litig., 208 F.R.D. 493 (S.D.N.Y. June 14, 2002), Sambor v. Omnia Credit Servs., Inc., 183 F.Supp.2d 1234 (D.Haw. 2002), Sanchez v. Robert E. Weiss, Inc., 173 F.Supp.2d 1029 (N.D. Cal. 2001), Castro v. ARS Nat'l Servs., Inc., No. 99 CIV. 4596, 2000 WL 264310 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 8, 2000), Ong v. Am. Collections Enter., No. 98-CV-5117, 1999 WL 51816 (E.D.N.Y. Jan. 15, 1999), Reed v. Smith, Smith & Smith, No. Civ. A. 93-956, 1995 WL 907764 (M.D.La. Feb. 8, 1995), Harvey v. United Adjusters, 509 F.Supp.1218 (D.Or. 1981), Semper v. JBC Legal Group, 2005 WL 2172377 (W.D. Wash. Sept. 6, 2005). (Collector's must communicate that a debt is disputed. Matter of Sommersdorf., 139 B.R. 700, 701 (Bankr. S.D. Ohio 1991); Ditty v. CheckRite, Ltd., 973 F.Supp. 1320, 1331 D.Utah 1997). (A consumer is entitled to dispute a debt orally and need not seek validation to overcome the debt collector's assumption of validity.), See. Rosado v. Taylor., 324 F. Supp. 2d 917 (N.D. Ind. 2004). (The collection attorney violated § 1692g(a)(3) by requiring that disputes be in writing to prevent the collector from considering the debt valid. The court noted that oral disputes overcome the assumption of validity and impose a requirement under § 1692e(8) that the debt collector report the dispute if reporting the debt to third parties. <sup>2</sup> Sambor v. Omnia Credit Servs., 183 F. Supp. 2d 1234 (D. Haw. 2002), Mendez v. M.R.S. Assoc., 2004 WL 1745779 \*2 (N.D. Ill. Aug. 3, 2004). (A consumer is entitled to dispute the validity of a debt for a good reason, a bad reason, or no reason at all), Whitten v. ARS National Servs, Inc., 2002 WL 1050320 \*4 (N.D. 111 May 23, 2002). (Imposing a requirement that a consumer have a 'valid' reason to dispute the debt is inconsistent with FDCPA), Castro v. ARS National Servs., Inc., 2000 WL 264310 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 8, 2000), Frey v. Satter, Beyer & Spires., 1999 WL 301650 (N.D. Ill. May 3, 1999), DeSantis v. Computer Credit, Inc., 269 f.3d 159 (2nd Cir. 2001), Mejia v. Marauder Corporation., 2007 WL 806486 (N.D. Cal. 2007). (Unlawful to suggest that proof of payment required for dispute).

- 31. As the Second Circuit opined, "a debt collector cannot require a consumer to have a valid reason or to submit particular types of documentation in order to dispute a debt." *DeSantis v. Computer Credit, Inc.*, 269 F.3d 159, 162 (2d Cir. 2001).
- 32. Plaintiff was misled into believing that there was no way to dispute this debt over the phone.
- 33. Plaintiff was misled into believing that a dispute must occur in writing.
- 34. Plaintiff was misled into believing that documentation would be required in order to effectuate his dispute.
- 35. Upon information and belief, Defendant and its employees wrongfully stated to Plaintiff that he could not orally dispute the debt with Defendant.
- 36. Upon information and belief, Defendant and its employees, wrongfully stated to Plaintiff that he could only dispute a debt in writing.
- 37. Upon information and belief, Defendant and its employee, by intentionally denying Plaintiff and any other debtor to dispute the debt orally unfairly intimidate and force debtors in to paying disputed debts.
- 38. Defendant's employee who spoke with Plaintiff intended to speak said words to Plaintiff.
- 39. The acts and omissions of Defendant and its employees done in connection with efforts to collect a debt from Plaintiff were done intentionally and willfully.
- 40. Upon information and belief, Defendant and its employees intentionally and willfully violated the FDCPA and do so as a matter of pattern and practice by not letting any of the class members orally dispute the debt contrary to the FDCPA.

#### PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff demands judgment against Defendant as follows:

- (a) Declaring that this action is properly maintainable as a Class Action and certifying Plaintiff as Class representative, and Joseph H. Mizrahi, Esq., as Class Counsel;
- (b) Awarding Plaintiff and the Class statutory damages;
- (c) Awarding Plaintiff and the Class actual damages;
- (d) Awarding Plaintiff costs of this Action, including reasonable attorneys' fees and expenses;
- (e) Awarding pre-judgment interest and post-judgment interest; and
- (f) Awarding Plaintiff and the Class such other and further relief as this Court may deem just and proper.

Respectfully submitted,

By: /s/ Joseph H. Mizrahi
Joseph H. Mizrahi, Esq.
Joseph H. Mizrahi Law, P.C.
337 Avenue W, Suite 2F
Brooklyn, New York 11223
Phone: (347) 927-4529

Fax: (347) 665-1545

Email: Jmizrahilaw@gmail.com

Attorney for Plaintiff

#### **DEMAND FOR TRIAL BY JURY**

Pursuant to Rule 38 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Plaintiff hereby requests a trial by jury on all issues so triable.

/s/ Joseph H. Mizrahi
Joseph H. Mizrahi, Esq.

Dated: Brooklyn, New York

September 27, 2017

JS 44 (Rev. 06/17)

### Case 1:17-cv-05650 Document $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ 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.)

purpose of initiating the civil do	ocket sheet. (SEE hvs1koc.	HONS ON NEXT FAGE O	r misrc	JKM.)					
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS				DEFENDANTS					
WILLIAM MARCHAN, on behalf of himself and all others similarly situated				RETRIEVAL MASTERS CREDITORS BUREAU, INC., a/k/a AMERICAN MEDICAL COLLECTION AGENCY					
(b) County of Residence of	f First Listed Plaintiff			County of Residence of First Listed Defendant					
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(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, A	Address, and Telephone Numbe	r)		Attorneys (If Known)					
JOSEPH H. MIZRAHI LA NY 11201, (917) 299-661		Plz W, 12 Fl, Broo	oklyn,						
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VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:	CHECK IF THIS UNDER RULE 2	IS A <b>CLASS ACTION</b> 3, F.R.Cv.P.	N D	EMAND \$		HECK YES only URY DEMAND:		complan	nt:
VIII. RELATED CASI IF ANY	(See instructions):	JUDGE			DOCKE	T NUMBER			
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09/27/2017 FOR OFFICE USE ONLY		/s/ Joseph H. M	/lizrahi						
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#### 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, JOSEPH	H H. MIZRAHI	, counsel for PLAINTIFF, do hereby certify that the above captioned civil action is ompulsory arbitration for the following reason(s):			
	X	monetary damages sought are in excess of \$150,000, exclusive of interest and costs,			
		the complaint seeks injunctive relief,			
	☒	Question of law rather than question of fact predominates <u>DISCLOSURE STATEMENT - FEDERAL RULES CIVIL PROCEDURE 7.1</u>			
NONE		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)			
provides because same jud case: (A)	that "A ci the cases a lge and ma ) involves	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) vil case is "related" to another civil case for purposes of this guideline when, because of the similarity of facts and legal issues or urise from the same transactions or events, a substantial saving of judicial resources is likely to result from assigning both cases to the agistrate judge." Rule 50.3.1 (b) provides that "A civil case shall not be deemed "related" to another civil case merely because the civil identical legal issues, or (B) involves the same parties." Rule 50.3.1 (c) further provides that "Presumptively, and subject to the power mine otherwise pursuant to paragraph (d), civil cases shall not be deemed to be "related" unless both cases are still pending before the			
		NY-E DIVISION OF BUSINESS RULE 50.1(d)(2)			
1.)	Is the ci County:	vil action being filed in the Eastern District removed from a New York State Court located in Nassau or Suffolk			
2.)		nswered "no" above: the events or omissions giving rise to the claim or claims, or a substantial part thereof, occur in Nassau or Suffolk			
	b) Did t District	he events or omissions giving rise to the claim or claims, or a substantial part thereof, occur in the Eastern			
Suffolk	County, olk Count	question 2 (b) is "No," does the defendant (or a majority of the defendants, if there is more than one) reside in Nassau or or, in an interpleader action, does the claimant (or a majority of the claimants, if there is more than one) reside in Nassau y?			
BAR ADMISSION					
I am cui	rrently ad	mitted in the Eastern District of New York and currently a member in good standing of the bar of this court.  No			
Are you	currently	y 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/ Joseph H. Mizrahi

### UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Eastern District of New York

WILLIAM MARCHAN, on behalf of himself and all others similarly situated,	) ) )					
Plaintiff(s)  V.  RETRIEVAL MASTERS CREDITORS BUREAU, INC., a/k/a AMERICAN MEDICAL COLLECTION AGENCY	) ) Civil Action No. ) ) )					
Defendant(s)	)					
SUMMONS IN A CIVIL ACTION						
To: (Defendant's name and address) RETRIEVAL MASTERS CREDITORS BUREAU, INC. 4 WESTCHESTER PLAZA, SUITE 110 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:  JOSEPH H. MIZRAHI LAW, P.C. 300 CADMAN PLAZA WEST, 12 FL BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201						
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.						
	DOUGLAS C. PALMER CLERK OF COURT					
Date:						
	Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk					

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Civil Action No.

#### PROOF OF SERVICE

(This section should not be filed with the court unless required by Fed. R. Civ. P. 4 (l))

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	☐ I left the summons at the individual's residence or usual place of abode with (name)							
	, a person of suitable age and discretion who resides there, on (date), and mailed a copy to the individual's last known address; or							
	☐ I served the summons on (name of individual) , w							
	designated by law to accept service of process on behalf of (name of organization)							
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I declare under penalty of perjury that this information is true.								
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Additional information regarding attempted service, etc:

# **ClassAction.org**

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: <u>Lawsuit: Retrieval-Masters Creditor's Bureau Unlawfully Restricted Consumer Debt Dispute</u>