## UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

ISTER NATANELOVA, on behalf of herself and all others similarly situated,

Plaintiffs,

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT AND DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

-against-

CAPITAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES, LP

Defendant.

Plaintiff ISTER NATANELOVA (hereinafter, "Plaintiff"), a New York resident, brings this class action complaint by and through his attorneys, Cohen & Mizrahi LLP, against Defendant CAPITAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES, LP ("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 § 1692 et seq. of Title 15 of the United States Code, commonly referred to as the Fair Debt Collections Practices Act ("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 marital 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 FDCPA 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, 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 actions of using a misleading, deceptive, unfair and unconscionable means to collect a debt.
- 6. Defendant's actions violated § 1692 *et seq.*, of 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. §1692a(3).
- 9. Defendant is a collection agency with its principal office located in Buffalo, New York.

- 10. 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 repeats and realleges the allegations contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "11" herein with the same force and effect as if set forth at length herein.
- 13. Plaintiff brings claims, pursuant to the Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(a) and 23(b)(3), individually and on behalf of the following consumer class (the "Class").
- 14. The Class consists of (a) all individuals with addresses in Queens County in the State of New York (b) to whom Defendant (c) sent a collection letter attempting to collect a consumer debt (d) failing to clearly state the amount of the debt which is due and owing, by implying that a payment sooner rather than later will be more economical for the consumer and by employing false, deceptive and misleading representations in connection with the collection of the debt (e) which letter was sent on or after a date one year prior to filing this action and on or before a date 21 days after filing this action.
- 15. The identities of all Class members are readily ascertainable from Defendant's records and those companies and entities on whose behalf they attempt to collect and/or have purchased debts.
- 16. Excluded from the Class are the Defendants and all officers, 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.
  - 17. There are questions of law and fact common to the Class, which common issues

predominate over any issues involving only individual class members. The principal issue is whether the Defendant's written communications to consumers, in the form attached as **Exhibit A**, violate 15 U.S.C. § 1962e.

- 18. The Plaintiff's claims are typical of the Class members, as all are based upon the same facts and legal theories.
- 19. The Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Class defined in this complaint. The Plaintiff has retained counsel with experience handling in consumer lawsuits, complex legal issues, and class actions, and neither the Plaintiff nor his attorneys have any interests, which might cause them not to vigorously pursue this action.
- 20. This action has been brought, and may properly be maintained, as a class action pursuant to the provisions of Fed. R. Civ. P. 23 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 Class defined above are 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 Class and those questions predominate over any questions or issues involving only individual class members. The principal issue is whether the Defendant's written communications to consumers, in the form 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 Class have claims arising out of the Defendant's 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 interest that are adverse to the absent Class members. Plaintiff is committed to vigorously litigating this matter. Plaintiff has also retained counsel with experience in handling consumer lawsuits, complex legal issues, and class actions. Neither the Plaintiff nor his 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 impractical. 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.
- 21. Certification of a class under Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(b)(3) is also appropriate in that the questions of law and fact are common to all members of the Class and 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.
- 22. 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).

#### ALLEGATIONS PARTICULAR TO ISTER NATANELOVA

23. Plaintiff repeats and realleges the allegations contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "22" herein with the same force and effect as if set forth at length herein.

- 24. 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, facsimile, and internet.
- 25. Upon information and belief, within the last year Defendant commenced efforts to collect an alleged consumer "debt" as defined by 15 U.S.C. 1692a(5), when it mailed a collection letter to Plaintiff seeking to collect on an unpaid account originally owed to Discover Bank.
- 26. On or about June 06, 2018, Defendant sent Plaintiff a collection letter (the "Collection Letter") seeking to collect a balance allegedly incurred for personal purposes. A copy of the Collection Letter is attached hereto and incorporated herein as **Exhibit A**.
- 27. The Collection Letter was sent or caused to be sent by persons employed by Defendant as a "debt collector" as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(6).
  - 28. The Collection Letter is a "communication" as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(2).
  - 29. Upon information and belief, Defendant's Collection Letter is a form letter.
- 30. Upon information and belief, the Defendant's Collection Letter is identical to other collection letters sent to consumers, which number in the hundreds.
  - 31. The Collection Letter provides, in pertinent part, as follows:

"Amount Due at Charge-off: \$10205.65 Interest Accrued Since Charge-off: \$0.00 Non-Interest Charges or Fees Accrued Since Charge-off: \$0.00".

32. As a result of the following counts Defendant violated the FDCPA.

# First Count Violation of 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(2), 1692e(10) and 1692e(5) False or Misleading Representations

33. Plaintiff repeats and realleges the allegations contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "33" herein with the same force and effect as if set forth at length herein.

34. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e provides, in pertinent part, as follows:

"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:

- (2) the false representation of
  - (A) the character, amount, or legal status of any debt; or...
- (5) the threat to take any action that cannot legally be taken or that is not intended to be taken
- (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."
- 35. The Collection Letter provides, in pertinent part, as follows:

" Amount Due at Charge-off: \$10205.65 Interest Accrued Since Charge-off: \$0.00 Non-Interest Charges or Fees Accrued Since Charge-off: \$0.00".

- 36. The least sophisticated consumer would understand that charges and fees would begin to accrue on the account if she did not pay.
  - 37. However, no such interest and fees were accruing on the account.
  - 38. Furthermore, the Defendant was not contractually entitled to interest and fees.
  - 39. The Defendant never intended to add any interest and fees to Plaintiff's account.
- 40. The Defendant misrepresented the character of the alleged debt, in violation of 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e and 1692e(2)(a), when it falsely implied charges fees could accrue on the account.

- 41. Defendant further threatened to take an action it did not intend to take, in violation of 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(5), when it implied it would add interest, fees, and other non-interest charges or fees to Plaintiff's alleged debt.
- 42. Defendant could have avoided any confusion by not listing charges, fees, and other non-interest charges or fees in its Collection Letter at all by providing "N/A." See *Wood v. Allied Interstate, LLC*, No.: 1-17-cv-04921 (N.D. Ill. Jun. 30, 2017) ("[B]y stating that fees and collection costs stood at '\$0.00,' instead of stating something like 'N/A' or declining to mention fees and collection costs at all, the letter reasonably could be read to imply that such charges would begin to accrue if Wood did not pay the debt. Why, after all, would Allied include a column for fees and collection charges, and insert a dollar figure (\$0.00), if not to suggest that such fees and costs might accrue in the future?")
- 43. Plaintiff suffered an injury in fact by being subjected to unfair and abusive practices of the Defendant.
- 44. Plaintiff suffered actual harm by being the target of the Defendant's misleading debt collection communications.
- 45. Defendant violated the Plaintiff's right not to be the target of misleading debt collection communications.
  - 46. Defendant violated the Plaintiff's right to a truthful and fair debt collection process.
- 47. Defendant used materially false, deceptive, misleading representations and means in its attempted collection of Plaintiff's alleged debt.
- 48. Defendant's communications were designed to cause the debtor to suffer a harmful disadvantage in charting a course of action in response to Defendant's collection efforts.

- 49. The FDCPA ensures that consumers are fully and truthfully apprised of the facts and of their rights. The FDPCA enables consumers to understand, make informed decisions about, and participate fully and meaningfully in the debt collection process. One purpose of the FDPCA, among others, is to provide information that helps consumers choose intelligently. The Defendant's false representations misled the Plaintiff in a manner that deprived her of her right to enjoy these benefits. As a result, Defendant's materially misleading statements trigger liability under § 1692e of the FDCPA.
- 50. Defendant's deceptive communications additionally violate the FDPCA since they frustrate the consumer's ability to intelligently choose his or her response.
- 51. As an actual and proximate result of the acts and omissions of Defendant, Plaintiff has suffered, including, without limitation, fear, stress, mental anguish, emotional stress and acute embarrassment for which he should be compensated in an amount to be established by a jury.
  - 52. As a result of the foregoing Count, Defendant violated the FDCPA.

#### PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff demands judgment against Defendants as follows:

- (a) Declaring that this action is properly maintainable as a Class Action and certifying Plaintiff as Class representative and Cohen & Mizrahi LLP, as Class Counsel;
- (b) Awarding Plaintiff and the Class statutory 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.

#### **COHEN & MIZRAHI LLP**

Dated: Brooklyn, New York By: /s/ Daniel C. Cohen

August 21, 2018 Daniel C. Cohen, Esq. Cohen & Mizrahi LLP

300 Cadman Plaza W, 12<sup>th</sup> floor Brooklyn, New York 11201

Phone: (929) 575-4175 Fax: (929) 575-4195 Email: dan@cml.legal Attorneys 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/ Daniel C. Cohen

Daniel C. Cohen, Esq.

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 sneet. (SEE INSTRUC	TIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF	THIS FO	ORM.)					
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS				DEFENDANTS					
ISTER NATANELOVA, on behalf of herself and all others similarly situated,				CAPITAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES, LP					
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Queens				County of Residence of First Listed Defendant					
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(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, A	Address, and Telephone Numbe	r)		Attorneys (If Known)					
COHEN & MIZRAHI LLP, 3	300 Cadman Plz W, 12	2 Fl., Brooklyn, NY	11201,						
(929)575-4175									
II. BASIS OF JURISDI	CTION (Place an "X" in O	ne Box Only)		TIZENSHIP OF P	RINCIPA	AL PARTIES			
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VI. CAUSE OF ACTIO	Brief description of ca Defendant violate	use: d the FDCPA							
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:   CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER RULE 23, F.R.Cv.P.			D	DEMAND \$ CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint:  JURY DEMAND: ▼ Yes □ No					
VIII. RELATED CASI									
IF ANY	(See instructions):	JUDGE			DOCKI	ET NUMBER			
DATE		SIGNATURE OF ATT		OF RECORD					
9/14/18 FOR OFFICE USE ONLY		/s/ Daniel Cohe	n						
RECEIPT # AM	MOUNT	APPLYING IFP		JUDGE		MAG. JUD	GE		

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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, DANIEL	COHEN		, counsel for PLAINTIFF		, do hereby certify that the above captioned civil action				
is ineligi	is ineligible for compulsory arbitration for the following reason(s):								
Ļ	monetary dan	nages sought are	in excess of \$150,000, exc	lusive of interest and	l costs,				
Ļ	the complaint seeks injunctive relief,								
L	the matter is o	otherwise ineligibl	e for the following reason	Question of law	rather than questions of fact predominates				
	DISCLOSURE STATEMENT - FEDERAL RULES CIVIL PROCEDURE 7.1								
NONI		tify any parent co	rporation and any publicly h	eld corporation that	owns 10% or more or its stocks:				
	<u>RE</u>	LATED CAS	E STATEMENT (Se	ection VIII on t	he Front of this Form)				
to another substantia deemed "i "Presump	r civil case for purposes of this al saving of judicial resources related" to another civil case i	s guideline when, be is likely to result fro nerely because the	ecause of the similarity of facts m assigning both cases to the s civil case: (A) involves identical	and legal issues or bec came judge and magisti legal issues, or (B) inv	ront of this form. Rule 50.3.1 (a) provides that "A civil case is "related" ause the cases arise from the same transactions or events, a rate judge." Rule 50.3.1 (b) provides that "A civil case shall not be olves the same parties." Rule 50.3.1 (c) further provides that shall not be deemed to be "related" unless both cases are still				
	NY-E DIVISION OF BUSINESS RULE 50.1(d)(2)								
1.)	Is the civil action be County?	eing filed in the	e Eastern District remo	oved from a New	York State Court located in Nassau or Suffolk				
2.)	If you answered "no a) Did the events o County?		ving rise to the claim o	or claims, or a su	ıbstantial part thereof, occur in Nassau or Suffolk				
	b) Did the events o District?	r omissions gi Yes	ving rise to the claim o	or claims, or a su	ubstantial part thereof, occur in the Eastern				
	c) If this is a Fair Debt Collection Practice Act case, specify the County in which the offending communication was received:  Queens County								
Suffolk	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? Yes No								
	(Note: A corporation	shall be conside		•	s the most significant contacts).				
	BAR ADMISSION								
	I am currently admitte	ed in the Easter	n District of New York ar	nd currently a mem	nber in good standing of the bar of this court.				
			Yes		No				
	Are you currently th	ne subject of a	ny disciplinary action	(s) in this or any	other state or federal court?				
			Yes (If yes, please	explain 🗹	No				
	I certify the accurac	cy of all inform	ation provided above.						
	•	Daniel Cohe	·						
	Signature. 13	united Colle	· · ·						

698 1/2 SOUTH OGDEN STREE BUFFALO, NY 14206-2317



Reference#

CAPITAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES, LP

698 1/2 South Ogden Street Buffalo, NY 14206-2317 Office Hours: M-F 8 am - 9 pm ET

Sat 8 am - 1 pm ET Toll Free: 1-800-960-2187, Fax: 716-512-6046

Toll Free TDD Line: 800-457-8568

June 06, 2018

Original Creditor: DISCOVER BANK Current Creditor: DISCOVER BANK Account #: XXXXXXXXXXXXXX2638

Description: Discover Card

Amount Due at Charge-Off: \$10205.65 Interest Accrued Since Charge-Off: \$.00

Non-Interest Charges or

Fees Accrued Since Charge-Off: \$0.00 Payments Made Since Charge-Off: \$0.00

Amount Due: \$10205.65

Ister Natanelova

RICHMOND HILL, NY 11418-1264

PLEASE DETACH AND RETURN TOP PORTION WITH PAYMENT TO ADDRESS LISTED BELOW

Dear Ister Natanelova:

This company has been engaged by DISCOVER BANK to resolve your delinquent debt of \$10205.65.

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 from receiving this notice that you dispute the validity of this debt or any portion thereof, 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 than the current creditor.

You may contact Capital Management Services, LP at P.O. Box 964, Buffalo, NY 14220-0120. Please submit your payment and make your check or money order payable to Discover to the address below. Payments and correspondence should be mailed to: Capital Management Services, LP, P.O. Box 964, Buffalo, NY 14220-0120. Overnight deliveries should be addressed to: Capital Management Services, LP., 698 1/2 South Ogden Street, Buffalo, NY 14206-2317. You may also make payments online at: www.cms-trans.com.

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

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR NEW YORK CITY RESIDENTS

This collection agency is licensed by the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs, License No. 1242722. Please contact Ronnie Learman at 1-866-900-9732 with any questions or concerns.

Please see additional page(s) for information regarding New York State Residents.

#### **IMPORTANT NOTICES:**

Debt collectors, in accordance with the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1692 et seq., are prohibited from engaging in abusive, deceptive, and unfair debt collection efforts, including but not limited to:

- (i) the use or threat of violence;
- (ii) the use of obscene or profane language; and
- (iii) repeated phone calls made with the intent to annoy, abuse, or harass.

If a creditor or debt collector receives a money judgment against you in court, state and federal laws may prevent the following types of income from being taken to pay the debt:

- 1. Supplemental security income, (SSI);
- 2. Social security;
- 3. Public assistance (welfare);
- 4. Spousal support, maintenance (alimony) or child support;
- 5. Unemployment benefits;
- 6. Disability benefits;
- 7. Workers' compensation benefits;
- 8. Public or private pensions;
- 9. Veterans' benefits;
- 10. Federal student loans, federal student grants, and federal work study funds; and
- 11. Ninety percent of your wages or salary earned in the last sixty days.

## UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Eastern District of New York

	Eastern Dis	trict of New York				
ISTER NATANELOVA, on behalf of her others similarly situated,	rself and all	) ) )				
Plaintiff(s)		)				
v.		Civil Action No.				
CAPITAL MANAGEMENT SERVICE	ES, LP	) ) )				
Defendant(s)		)				
	SUMMONS I	N A CIVIL ACTION				
To: (Defendant's name and address)	CAPITAL MANAGEI 698 1/2 SOUTH OG BUFFALO, NEW YC					
A lawsuit has been filed a	gainst you.					
are the United States or a United St. 12 (a)(2) or (3) — you must ser the Federal Rules of Civil Procedu whose name and address are:  CC 300	States agency, or an off we on the plaintiff an a					
If you fail to respond, judg You also must file your answer or		be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint.				
		DOUGLAS C. PALMER CLERK OF COURT				
Date:						
	_	Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk				

AO 440 (Rev. 06/12) Summons in a Civil Action (Page 2)

Civil Action No.

#### PROOF OF SERVICE

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

		ne of individual and title, if ar	ny)					
was re	ceived by me on (date)		·					
	☐ I personally served	the summons on the ind	lividual at (place)					
			on (date)	; or				
	☐ 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)  designated by law to accept service of process on behalf of (name of organization)							
	designated by law to	accept service of process		; or				
		on (date)						
	☐ I returned the summ							
	☐ Other ( <i>specify</i> ):							
	My fees are \$	for travel and S	for services, for a total of \$	0.00				
	I declare under penalty of perjury that this information is true.							
Date:		-	Server's signature					
		_	Printed name and title					
		_	Server's address					

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>Class Action: Capital Management Services Misrepresented Woman's Debt in Letter</u>