

**BARSHAY SANDERS, PLLC**  
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*Attorneys for Plaintiff*  
Our File No.: 114904

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

Nancy M. Romero, individually and on behalf of all  
others similarly situated,

Plaintiff,

vs.

Mullen & Iannarone, P.C.,

Defendant.

Docket No:

**CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT**

**JURY TRIAL DEMANDED**

Nancy M. Romero, 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 Mullen & Iannarone, P.C. (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.

4. At all relevant times, Defendant conducted business within the State of New York.

BARSHAY | SANDERS PLLC  
100 GARDEN CITY PLAZA, SUITE 500  
GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK 11530

## PARTIES

5. Plaintiff Nancy M. Romero is an individual who is a citizen of the State of New York residing in Nassau County, New York.

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

7. On information and belief, Defendant Mullen & Iannarone, P.C., is a New York Professional Corporation with a principal place of business in Suffolk 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).

## ALLEGATIONS

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

11. The Debt was primarily for personal, family or household purposes 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 November 13, 2017. (“**Exhibit 1.**”)

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. One such requirement is that the debt collector include “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.*” 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a)(3) (Emphasis added.)

19. The Letter states, “Unless within thirty (30) days of receipt of this letter you

dispute the validity of the debt or any portion thereof, the debt will be assumed to be valid.”

20. 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(c) provides that the failure of a consumer to dispute the validity of a debt may not be construed by any court as an admission of liability by the consumer.

21. The absence of the term “by the debt collector” in the Letter implies that the debt will assumed to be valid generally.

22. The Letter implies that the debt will assumed to be valid generally, when is actuality only Defendant and the creditor may assume the debt is valid pursuant to the FDCPA.

23. The absence of the term “by the debt collector” in the Letter implies that the debt will assumed to be valid by a court, credit reporting agency, or other entity of authority.

24. The Letter implies that the debt will assumed to be valid by a court, credit reporting agency, or other entity of authority, when is actuality only Defendant and the creditor may assume the debt is valid pursuant to the FDCPA.

25. The Letter is contrary to 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(c). *Diaz v. Residential Credit Sols., Inc.*, 965 F. Supp. 2d 249, 260 (E.D.N.Y. 2013).

26. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e prohibits a debt collector from using any false, deceptive, or misleading representations or means in connection with the collection of any debt.

27. § 1692e(2)(A) prohibits the false representation of the character, amount, or legal status of any debt.

28. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(10) specifically prohibits the “use of any false representation or deceptive means to collect or attempt to collect any debt.”

29. A collection letter is deceptive under 15 U.S.C. § 1692e if it can reasonably be read by the least sophisticated consumer to have two or more meanings, one of which is inaccurate.

30. A collection letter is also deceptive under 15 U.S.C. § 1692e if it is reasonably susceptible to an inaccurate reading by the least sophisticated consumer.

31. The letter could reasonably be read by the least sophisticated consumer to imply that the debt will assumed to be valid by a court, credit reporting agency, or other entity of authority, when is actuality only Defendant and the creditor may assume the debt is valid pursuant to the FDCPA.

32. The letter violates 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e and 1692g.

**CLASS ALLEGATIONS**

33. 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 collection letter that includes the statement “Unless within thirty (30) days of receipt of this letter you dispute the validity of the debt or any portion thereof, the debt will be assumed to be valid,” from one year before the date of this Complaint to the present.

34. 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.

35. Defendant regularly engages in debt collection.

36. The Class consists of more than 35 persons from whom Defendant attempted to collect delinquent consumer debts using a collection letter that includes the statement “Unless within thirty (30) days of receipt of this letter you dispute the validity of the debt or any portion thereof, the debt will be assumed to be valid.”

37. 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.

38. 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.

39. 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**

40. 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: March 4, 2018

**BARSHAY SANDERS, PLLC**

By: /s/ Craig B. Sanders  
Craig B. Sanders, Esq.  
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Garden City, New York 11530  
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*Attorneys for Plaintiff*  
Our File No.: 114904

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Law Offices  
of  
Mullen and Iannarone, P.C.

300 E. Main Street, Suite 3  
Smithtown, N.Y. 11787  
Suffolk 631 361-7050

Liberatore J. Iannarone

Mailing Address:  
P.O. Box 617  
Smithtown, N.Y. 11787

NOVEMBER 13, 2017

NANCY M ROMERO  
182 BELMONT BLVD  
ELMONT NY 11003

CLAIM BY : BETHPAGE FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

ACCOUNT NO: [REDACTED] 3195  
CLAIM AMOUNT: \$22,357.82

Dear Sir or Madam:

This account has been referred to our office for collection.

Unless within thirty (30) days of receipt of this letter you dispute the validity of the debt or any portion thereof, the debt will be assumed to be valid. If you notify our office in writing within the thirty (30) day period that the debt, or any portion thereof is disputed, We will obtain verification of the debt or a copy of the judgment and a copy of the verification or judgment will be mailed to you. We will also, if a written request is received from you within the thirty (30) day period, provide you with the name and address of the original creditor if it is different from the current creditor.

Any further inquiries concerning this claim should be made or sent to our office and not to our client.

Our office is authorized to make payment arrangements that are agreeable to our client. If you are in a position to pay voluntarily, you should contact our office for a mutually suitable written agreement.

This letter is an attempt to collect a debt and any information obtained will or may be used for that purpose.

Very Truly Yours,

MULLEN & IANNARONE, P.C.  
Attorneys

**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.)

<p><b>I. (a) PLAINTIFFS</b></p> <p>NANCY M. ROMERO</p> <p>(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff <u>NASSAU</u> <i>(EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)</i></p> <p>(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number)</p> <p>BARSHAY SANDERS, PLLC 100 Garden City Plaza, Ste 500, Garden City, NY 11530 (516) 203-7600</p>	<p><b>DEFENDANTS</b></p> <p>MULLEN &amp; IANNARONE, P.C.</p> <p>County of Residence of First Listed Defendant <u>SUFFOLK</u> <i>(IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)</i></p> <p>NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.</p> <p>Attorneys (If Known)</p>
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<p><b>II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION</b> (Place an "X" in One Box Only)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 2 U.S. Government Defendant</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)</p>	<p><b>III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES</b> (Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant)</p> <table style="width:100%;"> <tr> <td style="width:30%;">Citizen of This State</td> <td style="width:10%;"><input type="radio"/> 1</td> <td style="width:30%;">Incorporated or Principal Place of Business In This State</td> <td style="width:10%;"><input type="radio"/> 4</td> <td style="width:10%;"><input type="radio"/> 4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Citizen of Another State</td> <td><input type="radio"/> 2</td> <td>Incorporated and Principal Place of Business In Another State</td> <td><input type="radio"/> 5</td> <td><input type="radio"/> 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country</td> <td><input type="radio"/> 3</td> <td>Foreign Nation</td> <td><input type="radio"/> 6</td> <td><input type="radio"/> 6</td> </tr> </table>	Citizen of This State	<input type="radio"/> 1	Incorporated or Principal Place of Business In This State	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 4	Citizen of Another State	<input type="radio"/> 2	Incorporated and Principal Place of Business In Another State	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 5	Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country	<input type="radio"/> 3	Foreign Nation	<input type="radio"/> 6	<input type="radio"/> 6
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Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country	<input type="radio"/> 3	Foreign Nation	<input type="radio"/> 6	<input type="radio"/> 6												

**IV. NATURE OF SUIT** (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

CONTRACT	TORTS	FORFEITURE/PENALTY	BANKRUPTCY	OTHER STATUTES	
<input type="radio"/> 110 Insurance <input type="radio"/> 120 Marine <input type="radio"/> 130 Miller Act <input type="radio"/> 140 Negotiable Instrument <input type="radio"/> 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment <input type="radio"/> 151 Medicare Act <input type="radio"/> 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Excludes Veterans) <input type="radio"/> 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits <input type="radio"/> 160 Stockholders' Suits <input type="radio"/> 190 Other Contract <input type="radio"/> 195 Contract Product Liability <input type="radio"/> 196 Franchise	<p><b>PERSONAL INJURY</b></p> <input type="radio"/> 310 Airplane <input type="radio"/> 315 Airplane Product Liability <input type="radio"/> 320 Assault, Libel & Slander <input type="radio"/> 330 Federal Employers' Liability <input type="radio"/> 340 Marine <input type="radio"/> 345 Marine Product Liability <input type="radio"/> 350 Motor Vehicle <input type="radio"/> 355 Motor Vehicle Product Liability <input type="radio"/> 360 Other Personal Injury <input type="radio"/> 362 Personal Injury - Medical Malpractice	<p><b>PERSONAL INJURY</b></p> <input type="radio"/> 365 Personal Injury - Product Liability <input type="radio"/> 367 Health Care/ Pharmaceutical Personal Injury Product Liability <input type="radio"/> 368 Asbestos Personal Injury Product Liability <p><b>PERSONAL PROPERTY</b></p> <input type="radio"/> 370 Other Fraud <input type="radio"/> 371 Truth in Lending <input type="radio"/> 380 Other Personal Property Damage <input type="radio"/> 385 Property Damage Product Liability	<input type="radio"/> 625 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881 <input type="radio"/> 690 Other	<input type="radio"/> 422 Appeal 28 USC 158 <input type="radio"/> 423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157 <p style="text-align:center;"><b>PROPERTY RIGHTS</b></p> <input type="radio"/> 820 Copyrights <input type="radio"/> 830 Patent <input type="radio"/> 840 Trademark <p style="text-align:center;"><b>SOCIAL SECURITY</b></p> <input type="radio"/> 861 HIA (1395ff) <input type="radio"/> 862 Black Lung (923) <input type="radio"/> 863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g)) <input type="radio"/> 864 SSID Title XVI <input type="radio"/> 865 RSI (405(g)) <p style="text-align:center;"><b>FEDERAL TAX SUITS</b></p> <input type="radio"/> 870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff or Defendant) <input type="radio"/> 871 IRS—Third Party 26 USC 7609	<input type="radio"/> 375 False Claims Act <input type="radio"/> 400 State Reapportionment <input type="radio"/> 410 Antitrust <input type="radio"/> 430 Banks and Banking <input type="radio"/> 450 Commerce <input type="radio"/> 460 Deportation <input type="radio"/> 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations <input checked="" type="radio"/> 480 Consumer Credit <input type="radio"/> 490 Cable/Sat TV <input type="radio"/> 850 Securities/Commodities/Exchange <input type="radio"/> 890 Other Statutory Actions <input type="radio"/> 891 Agricultural Acts <input type="radio"/> 893 Environmental Matters <input type="radio"/> 895 Freedom of Information Act <input type="radio"/> 896 Arbitration <input type="radio"/> 899 Administrative Procedure Act/Review or Appeal of Agency Decision <input type="radio"/> 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes
<p><b>REAL PROPERTY</b></p> <input type="radio"/> 210 Land Condemnation <input type="radio"/> 220 Foreclosure <input type="radio"/> 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment <input type="radio"/> 240 Torts to Land <input type="radio"/> 245 Tort Product Liability <input type="radio"/> 290 All Other Real Property	<p><b>CIVIL RIGHTS</b></p> <input type="radio"/> 440 Other Civil Rights <input type="radio"/> 441 Voting <input type="radio"/> 442 Employment <input type="radio"/> 443 Housing/Accommodations <input type="radio"/> 445 Amer. w/Disabilities - Employment <input type="radio"/> 446 Amer. w/Disabilities - Other <input type="radio"/> 448 Education	<p><b>PRISONER PETITIONS</b></p> <p><b>Habeas Corpus:</b></p> <input type="radio"/> 463 Alien Detainee <input type="radio"/> 510 Motions to Vacate Sentence <input type="radio"/> 530 General <input type="radio"/> 535 Death Penalty <p><b>Other:</b></p> <input type="radio"/> 540 Mandamus & Other <input type="radio"/> 550 Civil Rights <input type="radio"/> 555 Prison Condition <input type="radio"/> 560 Civil Detainee Conditions of Confinement	<input type="radio"/> 710 Fair Labor Standards Act <input type="radio"/> 720 Labor/Management Relations <input type="radio"/> 740 Railway Labor Act <input type="radio"/> 751 Family and Medical Leave Act <input type="radio"/> 790 Other Labor Litigation <input type="radio"/> 791 Employee Retirement Income Security Act	<input type="radio"/> 462 Naturalization Application <input type="radio"/> 465 Other Immigration Actions	

**V. ORIGIN** (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

1 Original Proceeding     2 Removed from State Court     3 Remanded from Appellate Court     4 Reinstated or Reopened     5 Transferred from Another District (specify)     6 Multidistrict Litigation - Transfer     8 Multidistrict Litigation - Direct File

**VI. CAUSE OF ACTION**

Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing (Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity): 15 USC §1692

Brief description of cause: 15 USC §1692 Fair Debt Collection Practices Act Violation

**VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:**     CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER RULE 23, F.R.Cv.P.    DEMAND \$ \_\_\_\_\_    CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint: **JURY DEMAND:**     Yes     No

**VIII. RELATED CASE(S) IF ANY** (See Instructions)    JUDGE \_\_\_\_\_    DOCKET NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

DATE March 15, 2018    SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD /s/ Craig B. Sanders

**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**

RECEIPT # \_\_\_\_\_ AMOUNT \_\_\_\_\_ APPLYING IFP \_\_\_\_\_ JUDGE \_\_\_\_\_ MAG. JUDGE \_\_\_\_\_

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, Craig B. Sanders, counsel for Plaintiff, 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,
the complaint seeks injunctive relief,
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 of 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: NO
2. 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? YES
b) Did the events or omissions giving rise to the claim or claims, or a substantial part thereof, occur in the Eastern District? YES
c) If this is a Fair Debt Collection Practice Act case, specific the County in which the offending communication was received: NASSAU

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 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. Yes No

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**

Nancy M. Romero, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated	)	
_____	)	
<i>Plaintiff(s)</i>	)	
	)	Civil Action No.
v.	)	
	)	
Mullen & Iannarone, P.C.	)	
_____	)	
<i>Defendant(s)</i>	)	

**SUMMONS IN A CIVIL ACTION**

To: *(Defendant's name and address)*  
Mullen & Iannarone, P.C.  
300 E. Main Street , Suite 3  
Smithtown, New York 11787

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: [FDCPA Suit Claims Mullen & Iannarone Omitted Vital Phrase from Collection Letter](#)

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