UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS FORT WORTH DIVISION

BRITAINAY TATUM, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated;

Plaintiff,

Civil Action No: 4:18-cv-00389

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

-V.-

WILLIAMS RUSH & ASSOCIATES and John Does 1-25,

Defendant(s).

Plaintiff Britainay Tatum (hereinafter, "Plaintiff" or "Tatum"), brings this Class Action Complaint by and through her attorneys, The Law Office of Jonathan Kandelshein, against Defendant Williams Rush Associates (hereinafter "WRA"), 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 "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

- 1. The Court has jurisdiction over this class action pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692 et. seq. and 28 U.S.C. § 2201. The Court has pendent jurisdiction over the State law claims in this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367(a).
- 2. Venue is proper in this judicial district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(2) as this is where the majority of acts and omissions occurred.
- 3. Venue is also proper in this judicial district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(1) as the defendant resides and primarily conducts business here.

NATURE OF THE ACTION

- 4. 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"), and
 - 5. Plaintiff is seeking damages and declaratory relief.

PARTIES

- 6. Plaintiff is a resident of the State of Texas, County of Tarrant, residing at 3101 Gardenia Street, Fort Worth, TX 76119.
- 7. Defendant WRA is a "debt collector" as the phrase is defined in 15 U.S.C. § 1692(a)(6) and used in the FDCPA with an address at 4144 N Central Expy, Ste 945, Dallas, TX 75204-2112.
- 8. Upon information and belief, Defendant WRA 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.
- 9. 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

- 10. Plaintiffs bring this claim on behalf of the following case, pursuant to Fed. R. Civ.P. 23(a) and 23(b)(3).
 - 11. The Class consists of:
 - a. all individuals residing in the state of Texas;
 - b. who were sent an "offer to settle letter," from Defendant WRA;
 - c. whose letter deceptively offers false promises and statements regarding the impact of settling as it relates to a consumer's credit score;
 - d. 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 (2l) days after the filing of this action.

- 12. 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.
- 13. 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.
- 14. 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.
- 15. 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 their attorneys have any interests, which might cause them not to vigorously pursue this action.
- 16. 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:
 - e. <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.

- f. <u>Common Questions Predominate:</u> Common questions of law and fact exist as to all members of the Plaintiff Classes 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 USC §1692e.
- g. <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.
- h. 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.
- i. <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.
- 17. 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.

18. 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

- 19. 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.
- 20. Some time prior to October 21, 2017, an obligation was allegedly incurred to Everest Ft. Worth.
- 21. The Everest Ft. Worth obligation arose out of an educational loan in which money, property, insurance or services were the subject of the transaction. The educational loan was incurred primarily for personal, family or household purposes.
- 22. The alleged Everest Ft. Worth obligation is a "debt" as defined by 15 U.S.C.§ 1692a(5).
- 23. Defendant WRA is a "debt collector" as defined in 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(6) of the FDCPA.
- 24. Creditor Everest Ft. Worth contracted with the Defendant WRA to collect the alleged debt.

25. Defendant WRA 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.

<u>Violation – October 21, 2017 Collection Letter</u>

- 26. On or around October 21, 2017, Plaintiff received a collection letter from Defendant. (See Letter attached hereto as Exhibit A).
- 27. Defendant's collection letter offers Plaintiff a settlement plan by which she could pay off the alleged debt for less than the balanced owed.
- 28. The letter advises Plaintiff if she pays the settlement amount the resulting zero account balance "can be submitted for a credit report deletion."
- 29. Further, the letter states that Plaintiff's "credit score will increase when her defaulted account is deleted."
- 30. This statement is deceptive since the Defendant cannot control the Plaintiff's credit score.
- 31. The Defendant explicitly states that credit scores will increase with deletion, which is completely false. While the credit score may increase it also may not depending on the consumer's current credit portfolio.
- 32. Furthermore the letter is contradictory in a deceptive manner as it says the account can be marked as settled in full or deleted.
- 33. No further information is provided as to how this selection process occurs, nor would a consumer understand which is more important for a credit score to improve.
- 34. The letter makes deceptive promises with regard to the improvement of a credit score with the sole purpose of coercing Plaintiff to pay the debt.

- 35. This statement is deceptive and misleading as there are many factors which affect whether a consumer's credit score will improve.
- 36. As a result of Defendant's deceptive and misleading statement Plaintiff has been harmed.

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

- 37. 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.
- 38. 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.
- 39. 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.
- 40. Defendants made deceptive and misleading representations when they offered false and misleading promises of credit repair in an attempt to extract payment from Plaintiff in violation of 15 U.S.C. §§1692e, 1692e(2) and 1692e(10).
- 41. 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

42. 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 Britainay Tatum, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated, demands judgment from Defendant Williams Rush & Associates, as follows:

- 1. Declaring that this action is properly maintainable as a Class Action and certifying Plaintiff as Class representative, and Jonathan Kandelshein 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: May 22, 2018 Respectfully Submitted,

THE LAW OFFICE OF JONATHAN KANDELSHEIN

/s/ Jonathan Kandelshein
Jonathan Kandelshein
TX Bar No. 24094768
18208 Preston Rd, Suite D-9 #256
Dallas, TX 75252

Tel: 469-677-7863 Fax: 972-380-8118

jonathan.kandelshein@gmail.com Counsel for Plaintiff Britainay Tatum

JS 44 (Rev. 06/17) - TXND (Rev. 06/17)
Case 4:18-cv-00389-A

CIVIL COYER SHEET''
Pied 05/22/18

Page 1 of 2 PageID 10

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"

provided by local rules of court purpose of initiating the civil do					er 1974, is ie	quired for the use of	the Clerk of Co	ourt for th	ie	
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS				DEFENDANTS''						
Britainay Tatum, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situate										
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Tarrant				County of Residence of First Listed Defendant"						
(EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)				(IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)"						
				NOTE: IN LAND THE TRA	CONDEMNA ACT OF LAND	ATION CASES, USE T INVOLVED."	THE LOCATION (OF		
(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, A	Address, and Telephone Number	r)		Attorneys (If Know	vn)"					
The Law Offices of Jonathan Kandelshein				•						
18208 Preston Rd. Ste D-9	#256, Dallas, TX 75252	Ph: 469-677-7863								
II. BASIS OF JURISDI	CTION (Place an "X" in O	ne Box Only)		TIZENSHIP OF		PAL PARTIES		-		
☐ 1 U.S. Government	★ 3 Federal Question		((For Diversity Cases Only) and One Box for Defendant) PTF DEF PTF DEF"						
Plaintiff	(U.S. Government Not a Party)		Citize	Citizen of This State						
☐ 2 U.S. Government Defendant	☐ 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)		Citize	Citizen of Another State						
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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:"						
COMPLAINT:"		J, 1°.K.CV.F.				JURY DEMAND	Yes	□ No"		
VIII. RELATED CASE	E(S)'' (See instructions):"									
IF ANY	(See instructions):	JUDGE			DOC	KET NUMBER"				
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JS 44 Reverse (Rev. 06/17) - TXND (Rev. 06/17)

Case 4:18-cv-00389-A Document 1-1 Filed 05/22/18 Page 2 of 2 PageID 11 INSTRUCTIONS FOR ATTORNEYS COMPLETING CIVIL COVER SHEET FORM JS 44

Authority For Civil Cover Sheet

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replaces nor supplements the filings and service of pleading 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. Consequently, a civil cover sheet is submitted to the Clerk of Court for each civil complaint filed. The attorney filing a case should complete the form as follows:

- **I.(a)** Plaintiffs-Defendants. Enter names (last, first, middle initial) of plaintiff and defendant. If the plaintiff or defendant is a government agency, use only the full name or standard abbreviations. If the plaintiff or defendant is an official within a government agency, identify first the agency and then the official, giving both name and title.
- (b) County of Residence. For each civil case filed, except U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county where the first listed plaintiff resides at the time of filing. In U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county in which the first listed defendant resides at the time of filing. (NOTE: In land condemnation cases, the county of residence of the "defendant" is the location of the tract of land involved.)
- (c) Attorneys. Enter the firm name, address, telephone number, and attorney of record. If there are several attorneys, list them on an attachment, noting in this section "(see attachment)".
- II. Jurisdiction. The basis of jurisdiction is set forth under Rule 8(a), F.R.Cv.P., which requires that jurisdictions be shown in pleadings. Place an "X" in one of the boxes. If there is more than one basis of jurisdiction, precedence is given in the order shown below.

 United States plaintiff. (1) Jurisdiction based on 28 U.S.C. 1345 and 1348. Suits by agencies and officers of the United States are included here. United States defendant. (2) When the plaintiff is suing the United States, its officers or agencies, place an "X" in this box.

Federal question. (3) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1331, where jurisdiction arises under the Constitution of the United States, an amendment to the Constitution, an act of Congress or a treaty of the United States. In cases where the U.S. is a party, the U.S. plaintiff or defendant code takes precedence, and box 1 or 2 should be marked.

- Diversity of citizenship. (4) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1332, where parties are citizens of different states. When Box 4 is checked, the citizenship of the different parties must be checked. (See Section III below; **NOTE: federal question actions take precedence over diversity cases.**)
- III. Residence (citizenship) of Principal Parties. This section of the JS 44 is to be completed if diversity of citizenship was indicated above. Mark this section for each principal party.
- IV. Nature of Suit. Place an "X" in the appropriate box. If there are multiple nature of suit codes associated with the case, pick the nature of suit code that is most applicable. Click here for: Nature of Suit Code Descriptions.
- **V. Origin.** Place an "X" in one of the seven boxes.

Original Proceedings. (1) Cases which originate in the United States district courts.

Removed from State Court. (2) Proceedings initiated in state courts may be removed to the district courts under Title 28 U.S.C., Section 1441. When the petition for removal is granted, check this box.

Remanded from Appellate Court. (3) Check this box for cases remanded to the district court for further action. Use the date of remand as the filing date.

Reinstated or Reopened. (4) Check this box for cases reinstated or reopened in the district court. Use the reopening date as the filing date. Transferred from Another District. (5) For cases transferred under Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1404(a). Do not use this for within district transfers or multidistrict litigation transfers.

Multidistrict Litigation – Transfer. (6) Check this box when a multidistrict case is transferred into the district under authority of Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1407

Multidistrict Litigation – Direct File. (8) Check this box when a multidistrict case is filed in the same district as the Master MDL docket. **PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE IS NOT AN ORIGIN CODE 7.** Origin Code 7 was used for historical records and is no longer relevant due to changes in statue.

- VI. Cause of Action. Report the civil statute directly related to the cause of action and give a brief description of the cause. Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity. Example: U.S. Civil Statute: 47 USC 553 Brief Description: Unauthorized reception of cable service
- VII. Requested in Complaint. Class Action. Place an "X" in this box if you are filing a class action under Rule 23, F.R.Cv.P. Demand. In this space enter the actual dollar amount being demanded or indicate other demand, such as a preliminary injunction. Jury Demand. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether or not a jury is being demanded.
- VIII. Related Cases. This section of the JS 44 is used to reference related pending cases, if any. If a related case exists, whether pending or closed, insert the docket numbers and the corresponding judge names for such cases. A case is related to this filing if the case: 1) involves some or all of the same parties and is based on the same or similar claim; 2) involves the same property, transaction, or event; 3) involves substantially similar issues of law and fact; and/or 4) involves the same estate in a bankruptcy appeal.

Date and Attorney Signature. Date and sign the civil cover sheet.

EXHIBIT A

WILLIAMS RUSH ASSOCIATES ATAL IN CENTRAL EXPY STE 945 DALLAS TX 752042112 CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

October 21, 2017





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Account Summary

Original Creditor Everest Ft Worth

Account No.

Balance Due \$1894.89

Dear Britainay Tatum:

We have previously offered to settle your education loan for 65% of the balance. Time is running out to receive this offer!

The settlement payment of \$1231.68 would reduce the account balance to zero. Your account would be closed and can be reported to the three major credit reporting agencies as settled in full or it can be submitted for a credit report deletion.

The advantages of settling this debt include:

- Credit reports will be updated
- * Credit score increase when defaulted account is deleted
- * Stopping further collection efforts on this account

To take advantage of this offer, give us a call at (855)869-9847. Any delay could result in an increased settlement amount or continued collection efforts.

Please contact us today regarding this account. We look forward to working with you

Sincerely,

Cindy Ledezma

Williams Rush Associates

This communication is from a debt with the condition of a section of a debt. Any information of the condition of the conditio

PAYMENT OPTIONS

Payments By Internet

www.williamsrush-associates.com

Payments By Phone

Credit Card, Debit Card Or Check by Phone

Call (855) 869-9847

and the say lyin!

Mail Payments to:

Villams Rush & Associates, LLC

1944 N. Central Expressway, Suite 945

Dallas, TX 175204-3140

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: Williams Rush & Associates Accused of Making 'False' Promises Regarding Consumer's Credit Score