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June 27, 2011

# Via UPS Delivery

Clerk of the Court Civil Processing, Law Division Bergen County Justice Center 10 Main Street, RM 115 Hackensack, NJ 07601-7699

e: <u>Dolores Krug v. Focus Receivables Management, Inc.</u>

Docket No.: BER-L-4337-11

Our Client: Defendant, Focus Receivables Management, Inc.

Dear Sir or Madam:

Enclosed herewith please find an original and one copy of: (1) Answer To Class Action Complaint with Affirmative Defenses, Notices and Certifications on behalf of Defendant, CMRE Financial Services, Inc., with Proof of Filing/Service and (2) Defendant's Case Information Statement ("CIS").

Kindly file the original of each and return a file-stamped copy of each to our office in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. Please apply any filing fees to our Superior Court account no. 0010500.

Very truly yours,

VIRGINIA A. PALLOTTO

VAP/lb/859748.w Encs. as stated

cc: Via E-mail and First Class Mail (w/ enc.):

Philip D. Stern, Esq. Inna Ryu, Esq.

BUDD LARNER, P.C. 150 John F. Kennedy Parkway, CN 1000 Short Hills, NJ 07078-2703 (973) 379-4800 Attorneys for Defendant, FOCUS RECEIVABLES MANAGEMENT, LLC

DOLORES KRUG an individual; BRUCE HUFFMAN, an individual; DONALD MARSO, an individual; JONATHAN SUPPLER, an individual; on behalf of themselves and all others similarly situated,

Plaintiffs,

V.

FOCUS RECEIVABLES MANAGEMENT, LLC., a Georgia, Limited Liability Company,

Defendant.

SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY LAW DIVISION: BERGEN COUNTY DOCKET NO.: BER-L-4337-11

#### Civil Action

DEFENDANT, FOCUS
RECEIVABLES MANAGEMENT,
LLC'S ANSWER TO THE CLASS
ACTION COMPLAINT WITH
AFFIRMATIVE
DEFENSES, NOTICE,
CERTIFICATION AND PROOF OF
FILING/MAILING

Defendant, Focus Receivables Management, LLC ("Focus Receivables" or "defendant"), by way of Answer to the Class Action Complaint filed by the plaintiffs, states as follows:

#### I. PARTIES

- 1. It is admitted that plaintiff, Dolores Krug ("Krug"), is a natural person.
- 2. Focus Receivables is without sufficient information to form a belief as to the allegations contained in paragraph 2 of the Class Action Complaint as to plaintiff Krug's citizenship and residency, and, as such, leaves plaintiffs to their proofs.
  - 3. It is admitted that plaintiff Bruce Hoffman ("Hoffman") is a natural person.

- 4. Focus Receivables is without sufficient information to form a belief as to the allegations contained in paragraph 4 of the Class Action Complaint as to plaintiff Hoffman's citizenship and residency, and, as such, leaves plaintiffs to their proofs.
  - 5. It is admitted that plaintiff Donald Marso ("Marso") is a natural person.
- 6. Focus Receivables is without sufficient information to form a belief as to the allegations contained in paragraph 6 of the Class Action Complaint as to plaintiff Marso's citizenship and residency, and, as such, leaves the plaintiffs to their proofs.
  - 7. It is admitted that plaintiff Jonathan Supler ("Supler") is a natural person.
- 8. Focus Receivables is without sufficient information to form a belief as to the allegations contained in paragraph 8 of the Class Action Complaint as to plaintiff Supler's citizenship and residency, and, as such, leaves the plaintiffs to their proofs.
  - 9. Admitted.

#### II. PRIOR ACTION AND VENUE

- 10. Admitted.
- 11. It is admitted that plaintiffs consent to venue in Bergen County. Defendant is not challenging venue in Bergen County, New Jersey.

#### III. PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

- 12. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 12 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.
- 13. (a)-(c). Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 13, including all sub-parts (a) through (c) of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive

pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.

- 14. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 14 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.
- 15. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 15 of the Class Action Complaint as to contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.
- 16. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 16 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.
- 17. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 17 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.
- 18. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 18 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.

### IV. FACTS CONCERNING KRUG

- 19. Admitted.
- 20. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 20 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.
  - 21. Admitted.

- 22. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 22 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.
- 23. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 23 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.
  - 24. Admitted.
- 25. Admitted in part; denied in part. It is admitted only that the defendant placed prerecorded telephone messages to plaintiff Krug on some, but not all, of the dates listed. It is
  further noted that any alleged phone messages with dates of June 6, 12, 18, 21, 30, 2008, or
  which were filed over one-year prior to the filing of the Complaint are barred by the one-year
  statute of limitations contained in the Federal Debt Collection Practices Act ("FDCPA"). The
  defendant is without sufficient information as to the remaining allegations in paragraph 25 and,
  as such, they are also denied.
- 26. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 25 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required.

# V. FACTS CONCERNING HUFFMAN

- 27. Admitted.
- 28. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 28 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.
  - 29. Admitted.

- 30. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 30 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.
- 31. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 31 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.
  - 32. Admitted.
- 33. Admitted in part, Denied in part. It is admitted only that defendant placed messages on plaintiff's telephone answering machine, however, the defendant is without sufficient information to form a belief as to the remaining allegations as to the content as plaintiff does not list the dates of the alleged messages, and, as such, the remaining allegations contained in paragraph 33 of the Class Action Complaint are denied.
- 34. Admitted in part, Denied in part. It is admitted only that defendant placed messages on plaintiff's telephone answering machine, however, the defendant is without sufficient information to form a belief as to the content and dates, and, as such, the remaining allegations contained in paragraph 34 of the Class Action Complaint are denied.
- 35. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 35 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required.

#### VI. FACTS CONCERNING MARSO

- 36. Admitted.
- 37. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 37 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.

- 38. Admitted.
- 39. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 39 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.
- 40. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 40 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.
  - 41. Admitted.
- 42. Admitted in part; denied in part. It is admitted only that defendant left messages on plaintiff's answering machine on some dates. The defendant is without sufficient information to form a belief as to the remaining allegations and the same are denied.
- 43. Admitted in part; denied in part. It is admitted only that defendant left a message on plaintiff's answering machine. The defendant is without sufficient information to form a belief as to the remaining allegations and the same are denied.
- 44. Admitted in part; denied in part. It is admitted only that defendant left a message on plaintiff's answering machine. The defendant is without sufficient information to form a belief as to the remaining allegations and the same are denied.

# VII. FACTS CONCERNING SUPLER

- 45. Admitted.
- 46. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 46 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.
  - 47. Admitted.

- 48. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 48 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.
- 49. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 49 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.
  - 50. Admitted.
- 51. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 51 of the Class Action Complaint are denied.
- 52. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 52 of the Class Action Complaint are denied.
- 53. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 53 of the Class Action Complaint are denied.
- 54. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 54 of the Class Action Complaint are denied.

# VIII. FACTS COMMON TO ALL PLAINTIFFS

- 55. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 55 state conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required.
- 56. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 56 state conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required.
- 57. Admitted in part, denied in part. It is admitted only that Focus Receivables placed some telephone messages to some, but not all, of the plaintiffs and that some of those messages

were within one year of the filing of the Complaint and others were not as more fully detailed in the responses set forth above which are incorporated herein by reference.

- 58. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 58 state conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required.
- 59. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 59 state conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required.
- 60. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 60 state conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that this contains allegations of fact, the same are denied.
- 61. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 61 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied as stated as set forth more fully above in responses to specific plaintiffs.
- 62. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 62 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied as stated as set forth more fully above in responses to specific plaintiffs.
- 63. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 63 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied as stated as set forth more fully above in responses to specific plaintiffs.
- 64. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 64 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required.

65. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 65 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required.

# IX. POLICIES AND PRACTICES COMPLAINED OF

- 66. (a)-(c). Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 66 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required.
- 67. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 67 of the Class Action Complaint contain conclusions of law to which no responsive pleading is required.

### X. CLASS ALLEGATIONS

- 68. It is admitted that plaintiffs have filed this as a class action, it is denied that class treatment or class certification is appropriate or proper here.
- 69. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 69 state conclusions of law to which no response is required.
- 70. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 70 state conclusions of law to which no response is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.
- 71. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 71 state conclusions of law to which no response is required.
- 72. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 72 state conclusions of law to which no response is required.
- 73. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 73 state conclusions of law to which no response is required.
- 74. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 74 state conclusions of law to which no response is required.

- 75. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 75 state conclusions of law to which no response is required.
- 76. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 76 state conclusions of law to which no response is required.
- 77. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 77 state conclusions of law to which no response is required.
- 78. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 78 state conclusions of law to which no response is required. To the extent that the allegations may be construed to include allegations of fact, the allegations are denied.
- 79. (a)-(e). Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 79 (a)-(e) state conclusions of law to which no response is required.

# [Note: numbers 80-83 are skipped in the Class Action Complaint]

- 84. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 84 state conclusions of law to which no response is required.
- 85. Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 85 state conclusions of law to which no response is required.

# [Note: number 86 is skipped in the Class Action Complaint]

# XI. CAUSE OF ACTION

- 87. Defendant incorporates its responses to the preceding paragraphs as fully as thought set forth herein.
- 88. (a)-(c). Denied. The allegations contained in paragraph 88 (a)-(c) state conclusions of law to which no response is required.

### XII. PRAYER FOR RELIEF

89. (a)-(e). The allegations contained in paragraph 89 (a)-(e) state conclusions of law and requests to which no response is required.

WHEREFORE, the defendant, Focus Receivables Management, LLC, demands judgment in its favor and against the plaintiffs, both individually and on behalf of others similarly situated, on all counts of the Class Action Complaint, together with attorneys' fees and costs of suit and such other relief as the Court deems appropriate.

#### AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSES

# FIRST AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE

The Class Action Complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted.

# SECOND AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE

Plaintiffs have not alleged any facts supporting any claim that they sustained any actual damages and, in fact, plaintiffs sustained no actual damages and statutory damages are not warranted here given the alleged technical violations.

#### THIRD AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE

The matter is inappropriate for class action treatment or certification under New Jersey Court Rule 4:32-1 and Rule 4:32-2 and Defendant reserves the right to seek attorneys' fees and costs should class certification be denied.

#### FOURTH AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE

The plaintiffs' claims are or may be barred by the applicable statutes of limitations to the extent that any alleged actions or inactions occurred over one year prior to the filing of the complaint.

#### FIFTH AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE

Defendant maintains that this matter is improper for class certification under New Jersey Court Rule 4:32-1 and Rule 4:32-2 and the law, including but not limited to the following, the alleged number of potential class members, the likelihood of no recovery or *de minimus* recovery for any class members, the difficulty with administering a class of such size especially given the cap on damages in the FDCPA, and the lack of superiority of proceeding as a class action, and the lack of typicality and predominance.

# SIXTH AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE

If any technical violation of the FDCPA occurred, which is denied by Defendant, the Defendant acted in good faith as there was, and remains, a split of authority in the courts, as well as between the FDCPA and certain state laws, as to what information can be left on telephone answering machines or messages without potentially disclosing information to third-parties, and this mitigates against any recovery or a *de minimis* recovery, if any, for the individual plaintiffs and/or the class.

# SEVENTH AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE

To the extent that some or all of the debts for the plaintiffs are not "consumer" debts, the FDCPA is inapplicable and those plaintiffs are unsuitable to act as class representatives.

#### EIGHTH AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE

Plaintiffs are not suitable to be class representatives as they have filed other class actions for their own profit. In addition, their claims are also not typical or representative of other potential class members.

#### NINTH AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE

Any alleged class action damages may not exceed the statutory cap for class actions set forth in the FDCPA which is the lesser of \$500,000 or 1% of the net worth of a defendant. It is further alleged that due to the anticipated size of the proposed class, that any class action in this matter is unlawful under the FDCPA since the anticipated costs and expenses of class notice and administration would defeat the cap on class damages.

### TENTH AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE

Plaintiffs are not entitled to declaratory relief as requested under the FDCPA.

#### ELEVENTH AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE

The Class Action Complaint does not describe plaintiffs' claims with sufficient particularity to enable defendant to determine what additional defenses it may have. Therefore, defendant reserves the right to assert additional defenses that may be pertinent once the precise nature of plaintiffs' claims is ascertained through discovery. The absence or omission of any separate defense that defendant may seek to raise but has not done so to date is the result of plaintiffs' failure to plead such necessary facts and is not intended to constitute a waiver of such defense.

WHEREFORE, the defendant, Focus Receivables Management, LLC, demands judgment in its favor and against the plaintiffs, both individually and on behalf of others similarly situated, on all counts of the Class Action Complaint, together with attorneys' fees and costs of suit and such other relief as the Court deems appropriate.

BUDD LARNER, P. C.

Attorneys for Defendant,

Focus Receivables Management, LLC

Virginia A. Pallotto

Dated: June 4, 2011

**CERTIFICATIONS** 

Pursuant to Rule 4:5-1(b)(2), this matter is not the subject of any other action pending in

any court or of any pending arbitration proceedings and I know of no other parties that should be

joined to this case. However, as set forth in the Class Action Complaint, the same parties had

been involved in an identical case in the United States District Court for the District of New

Jersey, Civil Action No. 09-cv-04310-JEI-AMD, which was dismissed without prejudice via

stipulation.

I certify that confidential personal identifiers have been redacted from documents now

submitted to the Court, and will be redacted from all documents submitted in the future in

compliance with Rule 1:38-7(b).

NOTICE OF TRIAL COUNSEL

Pursuant to Rule 4:25-4, Virginia A. Pallotto, Esq., is hereby designated as trial counsel

for the defendant, Focus Receivables Management, LLC, in the above matter.

PROOF OF FILING/MAILING

I certify that I caused the original of this Answer to filed with the Court via United Parcel

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Service, next day delivery, on this date, and also on this date served a copy of this Answer upon all counsel of record via e-mail and First Class Mail, postage pre-paid.

BUDD LARNER, P. C. Attorneys for Defendant, Focus Receivables Management, LLC

By:

Virginia A. Pallotto

Dated: June 2, 2011 00859686.doc

# **Appendix XII-B1**



# CIVIL CASE INFORMATION STATEMENT (CIS)

Use for initial Law Division Civil Part pleadings (not motions) under Rule 4:5-1

FOR USE BY CLERK'S OFFICE ONLY	
PAYMENT TYPE: CK CG C	A
CHG/CK NO.	
AMOUNT:	
OVERPAYMENT:	
BATCH NUMBER:	

	Pleading will be rejected for filing, under Rule 1:5-6(c), if information above the black bar is not completed					OVERPA'	OVERPAYMENT:		
or attorney			s signature is not affixed				BATCH NUMBER:		
ATTORNEY/PRO SE NAME Virginia A. Pallotto  FIRM NAME (if applicable) Budd Larner, P.C.  OFFICE ADDRESS 150 John F. Kennedy Parkway, 3rd Floor Short Hills, NJ 07078-2703			TELEPHON (973) 315						
						DOCKET NUMBER (when available) BER-L-4337-11  DOCUMENT TYPE Answer to Class Action Complaint			
						NAME OF PARTY (e.	g., John Doe, Plaintiff)	CAPT	
Defendant, Focus Receivables Management, LLC			Dolores Krug, et al. v. Focus Receivables Management, LLC a Georgia, Limited Liability Company						
CASE TYPE NUMBE	ER (See reverse side for listing)	IS TH	S A PROFESS	SIONAL MA	LPRACTICE CAS	E?	☐ YES	M NO	
999			IF YOU HAVE CHECKED "YES," SEE N.J.S.A. 2A:53 A -27 AND APPLICABLE CASE LAW REGARDING YOUR OBLIGATION TO FILE AN AFFIDAVIT OF MERIT.						
RELATED CASES PI	ENDING?	IF YE	S, LIST DOCK	ET NUMBE	RS				
☐ YES	No No								
DO YOU ANTICIPATE ADDING ANY PARTIES (arising out of same transaction or occurrence)?  Yes No			NAME OF DEFENDANT'S PRIMARY INSURANCE COMPANY (if known)  Executive Risk Indemnity, Inc.  UNKNOWN						
									THE
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USE THIS SPACE TO ACCELERATED DIS	O ALERT THE COURT TO ANY S POSITION management needed for pu	PECIAL (	CASE CHARAC	CTERISTIC	S THAT MAY WA	RRANT IND			
to complete prop	posed class settlement.								
Do you or ☐ Yes	YOUR CLIENT NEED ANY DISABILITY	ACCOMMO	DATIONS?	IF YES, PL	EASE IDENTIFY TH	E REQUESTEI	D ACC OMMODA	ATION	
	ERPRETER BE NE EDED?			IF YES, FO	OR WHAT LANGUAG	E?			
I certify that conf	idential personal identifiers documents submitted in the	have be	en redacted	from doc	uments now s	ubmitted t	to the court	, and will be	

ATTORNEY SIGNATURE:



# CIVIL CASE INFORMATION STATEMENT

	(CIS) Use for initial pleadings (not motions) under <i>Rule</i> 4:5-1									
CASE TYPES (Choose one and enter number of case type in appropriate space on the reverse side.)										
15 175 302 399 502 506 510 511 512 801 802	150 days' discovery  NAME CHANGE FORFEITURE TENANCY REAL PROPERTY (other than Tenance BOOK ACCOUNT (debt collection mail OTHER INSURANCE CLAIM (INCLUE) PIP COVERAGE UM or UIM CLAIM ACTION ON NEGOTIABLE INSTRUM LEMON LAW SUMMARY ACTION OPEN PUBLIC RECORDS ACT (SUM OTHER (Briefly describe nature of actions)	tters only) DING DECLARATORY JU IENT IMARY ACTION)		•						
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If you believe this case requires a track other than that provided above, please indicate the reason on Side 1, in the space under "Case Characteristics.										
Please chec	k off each applicable category Verbal Threshold	Putative Class Ac	tion	☐ Title 59						