a corporation; and	)
Precision Law Center LLC, a limited liability company;	{
Defendants.	}

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Plaintiff, the Federal Trade Commission ("FTC"), for its complaint alleges:

The FTC brings this action under Sections 13(b) and 19 of the 1. Federal Trade Commission Act ("FTC Act"), 15 U.S.C. §§ 53(b) and 57b, and the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act, Public Law 111-8, Section 626, 123 Stat. 524, 678 (Mar. 11, 2009) ("Omnibus Act"), as clarified by the Credit Card Accountability Responsibility and Disclosure Act of 2009, Public Law 111-24, Section 511, 123 Stat. 1734, 1763-64 (May 22, 2009) ("Credit Card Act"), and amended by the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, Public Law 111-203, Section 1097, 124 Stat. 1376, 2102-03 (July 21, 2010) ("Dodd-Frank Act"), 12 U.S.C. § 5538, to obtain temporary, preliminary, and permanent injunctive relief, rescission or reformation of contracts, restitution, the refund of monies paid, disgorgement of ill-gotten monies, and other equitable relief for Defendants' acts or practices in violation of Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a), and the Mortgage Assistance Relief Services Rule, 16 C.F.R. Part 322 ("MARS Rule"), recodified as Mortgage Assistance Relief Services (Regulation O), 12 C.F.R. Part 1015 ("Regulation O"), in connection with the marketing and sale of Mortgage Assistance Relief Services ("MARS").

#### JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 2. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331, 1337(a), and 1345; 15 U.S.C. §§ 45(a), 53(b), and 57b; and Section 626, of the Omnibus Act, as clarified by Section 511 of the Credit Card Act, and amended by Section 1097 of the Dodd-Frank Act, 12 U.S.C. § 5538.
- 3. Venue is proper in this District under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b) and (c), and 15 U.S.C. § 53(b).

**PLAINTIFF** 

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- Plaintiff FTC is an independent agency of the United States 4. Government created by statute. 15 U.S.C. § 41 et seq. The FTC enforces Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a), which prohibits unfair or deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce. Pursuant to the Omnibus Act, § 626, 123 Stat. at 678, as clarified by the Credit Card Act, § 511, 123 Stat. at 1763-64, the FTC promulgated the MARS Rule, 16 C.F.R. Part 322, which among other things, requires MARS providers to make certain disclosures, prohibits MARS providers from making certain representations, and prohibits MARS providers from collecting a fee in advance of the consumer's acceptance of mortgage assistance relief obtained by the MARS provider. The Dodd-Frank Act, § 1097, 124 Stat. at 2102-03, 12 U.S.C. § 5538, transferred rulemaking authority over the MARS Rule to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which recodified the Rule as 12 C.F.R. Part 1015 effective December 30, 2011, and designated it "Regulation O." Pursuant to Dodd-Frank Act § 1097, 12 U.S.C. § 5538, the FTC retains authority to enforce the MARS Rule and Regulation O.
- 5. The FTC is authorized to initiate federal district court proceedings, by its own attorneys, to enjoin violations of the FTC Act; the Omnibus Act as clarified by the Credit Card Act and amended by the Dodd-Frank Act; the MARS Rule; and Regulation O, and to secure such equitable relief as may be appropriate in each case, including rescission or reformation of contracts, restitution, the refund of monies paid, and the disgorgement of ill-gotten monies. 15 U.S.C. §§ 53(b), 56(a)(2)(A)-(B), and 57b; and § 626, 123 Stat. at 678, as clarified by § 511, 123 Stat. at 1763-64 and amended by § 1097, 124 Stat. at 2102-03, 12 U.S.C. § 5538.

#### **DEFENDANTS**

6. Defendant Sameer (a.k.a. "Sammy") Lakhany ("Lakhany") is an individual who, acting alone or in concert with others, and through his

interrelated companies described below, has operated and continues to operate businesses that offer to provide or provide MARS, as defined in 16 C.F.R. § 322.2, recodified as 12 C.F.R. § 1015.2, including but not limited to loan modifications and foreclosure relief. These businesses include, but are not limited to, FreeFedLoanMod.org, HouseHoldRelief.org, MyHomeSupport.org, and Precision Law Center. At times material to this complaint, acting alone or in concert with others, Defendant Lakhany has formulated, directed, controlled, had the authority to control, or participated in the acts and practices set forth in this complaint. In connection with the matters alleged herein, Lakhany transacts or has transacted business in this District and throughout the United States.

- 7. Defendant The Credit Shop, LLC ("Credit Shop") is a California limited liability company owned, directed and/or controlled by Lakhany with a last known business address at 655 S. Main Street, Suite 200-127, Orange, CA 92868, which is a mail drop box. At times material to this complaint, Credit Shop has transacted business in the Central District of California. Credit Shop, among other things, owns the fictitious business name HouseHoldRelief.org.
- 8. Defendant Fidelity Legal Services LLC (a.k.a. "Fidelity Legal Services Network LLC") ("Fidelity Legal") is a California limited liability company owned, directed and/or controlled by Lakhany, alone or in concert with others, with a last known business address at 655 S. Main Street, Suite 200-161, Orange, CA 92868, which is a mail drop box. At times material to this complaint, Fidelity Legal has transacted business in the Central District of California. Fidelity Legal, among other things, has maintained the websites and toll-free telephone numbers used by Defendants in furtherance of the acts and practices described herein.
- 9. Defendant Titanium Realty, Inc. ("Titanium Realty") is a suspended California corporation owned, directed and/or controlled by Lakhany with a last known business address at 2300 E. Katella Avenue, Suite 450, Anaheim, CA

92806. At times material to this complaint, Titanium Realty has transacted business in the Central District of California. Titanium Realty has maintained a bank account into which numerous consumers' payments for loan modification services were deposited and out of which the salaries of Defendants' employees were paid.

- 10. Defendant Precision Law Center, Inc., also doing business as Precision Law Center, is a California corporation owned, directed and/or controlled by Lakhany with a last known business address at 6 Hutton Center Drive, Suite 600, South Coast Metro, CA 92707. At times material to this complaint, Precision Law Center, Inc. has transacted business in the Central District of California. Precision Law Center, among other things, is a specious law firm purporting to offer mortgage relief services to consumers by representing them in litigation against their lenders.
- 11. Defendant Precision Law Center LLC, also doing business as Precision Law Center, is a California limited liability company owned, directed and/or controlled by Lakhany with a last known business address at 6 Hutton Center Drive, Suite 600, South Coast Metro, CA 92707. At times material to this complaint, Precision Law Center, LLC has transacted business in the Central District of California. Precision Law Center, among other things, is a specious law firm purporting to offer mortgage relief services to consumers by representing them in litigation against their lenders.
- 12. At times material to this complaint, Credit Shop, Fidelity Legal, Titanium Realty, Precision Law Center, Inc., and Precision Law Center LLC (collectively, "Corporate Defendants") have operated as a common enterprise while engaging in the deceptive acts and practices set forth below. Defendants have conducted the business practices described below through an interrelated network of companies that have common ownership, business functions, employees, and office locations; that have commingled funds; and that have

shared one another's marketing materials. Because these Corporate Defendants have operated as a common enterprise, each of them is jointly and severally liable for the acts and practices alleged below. Defendant Lakhany has formulated, directed, controlled, had the authority to control, or participated in the acts and practices of the Corporate Defendants that constitute the common enterprise.

#### COMMERCE

13. At all times relevant to this complaint, Defendants have maintained a substantial course of trade in or affecting commerce, as "commerce" is defined in Section 4 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 44.

#### **SUMMARY OF COMPLAINT**

- 14. Defendants employ two related scams that prey on financially distressed homeowners by deceptively promising substantial relief from unaffordable mortgages and foreclosure. In the first scam, Defendants Lakhany, Credit Shop, Fidelity Legal, and Titanium Realty (collectively, "Audit Defendants") deceptively lure consumers by claiming to be non-profit organizations that provide free loan modification and foreclosure relief services. After gaining consumers' confidence, Audit Defendants persuade consumers to spend typically between \$795 and \$1595 on a forensic loan audit that purportedly will guarantee or virtually guarantee a loan modification. Audit Defendants promise that the forensic loan audit will force consumers' lenders to agree to a loan modification. In reality, in numerous instances, Audit Defendants fail to obtain any relief for consumers, and the purported loan audit does little or nothing to assist consumers.
- 15. In the second, related scam, Defendants Lakhany, Precision Law Center, Inc., and Precision Law Center LLC (collectively, "Mass Joinder Defendants") offer to sell consumers the services of their purportedly specialized law firm. Mass Joinder Defendants have marketed the firm by targeted direct mail, as well as by targeting consumers who did not receive a loan modification

after hiring Audit Defendants in the initial scam. For a fee of typically between \$6000 and \$10,000, the firm promises to obtain favorable concessions and stop foreclosure by suing consumers' lenders. The firm, however, is a sham. It is owned by non-lawyer Lakhany and fails to employ attorneys licensed as appropriate in the homeowners' state or otherwise to zealously prosecute consumers' cases. Indeed, in every case filed by Precision Law Center of which the FTC is aware, Precision Law Center has done nothing beyond filing the complaint, resulting in the dismissal of most of the cases and pending orders to show cause in the remainder.

#### **DEFENDANTS' BUSINESS PRACTICES**

- 16. Since at least late 2009, Defendants have engaged in a course of conduct to advertise, market, offer to sell, and sell to homeowners MARS, including but not limited to mortgage loan modification and foreclosure relief services.
- 17. Defendants have marketed their services to homeowners who are in financial distress, behind on their mortgage loans, or in danger of losing their homes to foreclosure.

#### A. The Loan Modification Scam

- 18. Numerous mortgage lenders and servicers offer free loan modification programs to assist financially distressed homeowners. Additionally, numerous non-profit organizations offer free mortgage counseling to consumers. Government agencies, consumer advocacy groups, and the media have long advised consumers who need assistance applying for a loan modification or avoiding foreclosure to seek help from legitimate, non-profit, HUD-certified organizations that provide free assistance, and to be alert to loan modification scams.
- 19. Audit Defendants have capitalized on this widely-disseminated advice. They deceptively have lured consumers and gained their confidence by

portraying themselves as non-profit, accredited housing counselors with special qualifications. They also have represented that they provide free services that significantly increase the likelihood that consumers will obtain a loan modification or stop foreclosure.

- 20. In numerous instances, after these initial representations, Audit Defendants' sales representatives have told consumers that Audit Defendants provide a unique type of service that will virtually assure consumers of a loan modification. Audit Defendants have claimed that this service a forensic loan audit will identify regulatory and contractual violations by the lender that will force it to agree to a modification. Audit Defendants claim that 90% of the loan audits they perform reveal such violations. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants have told consumers that in greater than 90% of the cases, Audit Defendants are successful in obtaining loan modifications.
- 21. After making these representations, in numerous instances, Audit Defendants have told consumers the forensic loan audit is the only service not "funded" by the outside donors who otherwise pay for Audit Defendants' loan modification services. They request that consumers pay a fee of typically between \$795 and \$1595 for the loan audit before loan modification services begin. Audit Defendants have told consumers that there is little risk in purchasing a loan audit because in the unlikely event that their loan audit does not reveal violations, 70% of the fee will be refunded.
- 22. In numerous instances, after consumers have paid this advance fee, Audit Defendants have failed to perform a loan audit that provided the claimed leverage and have failed to obtain a loan modification or stop foreclosure. Instead, many consumers have received the run-around, as Audit Defendants fail to return consumers' calls and emails, and undertake little or no effective communication with lenders. Exacerbating matters, Audit Defendants have recommended that consumers skip making mortgage payments and refrain from

communicating with their lenders. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants have refused to provide refunds.

23. In numerous instances, consumers who have paid Audit Defendants' fee have suffered significant economic injury, including but not limited to, incurring late payments fees, damaging their credit, going into foreclosure, and losing their homes.

#### Initial Communications: Audit Defendants' Websites

24. Audit Defendants' primary means of initial contact with consumers has been through several web sites, and in some instances, through outbound telemarketing. Audit Defendants have operated websites including, but not limited to, FreeFedLoanMod.org ("FFLM"), HouseHoldRelief.org ("HHR"), and MyHomeSupport.org, ("MHS"). The web sites have urged consumers to call a toll-free number or submit personal information online to request a call-back.

#### FreeFedLoanMod.Org Web Site

- 25. Beginning no later than approximately April 2010, and continuing through the present, Audit Defendants have operated the web site FreeFedLoanMod.org. The web site has been a major source of consumers for Audit Defendants' deceptive MARS operations. However, Audit Defendants have not offered services through an organization called "FreeFedLoanMod.org." Instead, consumers who call the toll-free number on the FFLM web site reach sales representatives for Audit Defendants' other fictitious business identities, including HHR and MHS.
- 26. Although Audit Defendants have redesigned their web pages from time to time, at relevant times, the landing page for FFLM prominently has featured a picture of President Obama and in large, bold-face print, has urged consumers to call a toll-free number to "Speak With a Counselor and Receive a FREE Loan Modification Under the Obama Loan Modification Programs."

- 28. The web site has included no disclosure that Audit Defendants are not associated with the government and that their service is not approved by the government or the consumer's lender.
- 29. The landing page also has included two bold headlines, set apart from other text, reiterating, "Free Loan Modification." The web site also has prominently advertised that Audit Defendants provide "FREE Attorney Assistance" and "FREE Foreclosure Avoidance," and that "[a]ll of the tools and services that we provide are completely FREE of charge to YOU, the homeowner."
- 30. The text of the landing page has explained, "[w]e have setup [sic] relationships with various outside third parties who have been generous enough to donate the resources necessary for us to help homeowners get a loan modification absolutely **FREE!!!**"
- 31. The FFLM web site has included no disclosure that Foresnic Loan Audit Defendants charge typically between \$795 and \$1595 for a loan audit, payable before services begin.
- 32. The landing page also has included prominent headlines claiming that Audit Defendants' services will result in, among other things, "Permanent Interest Rate Reductions" "Step Interest Rate Reductions," and "Principal Balance Reductions." The web site further has claimed that "[o]n average we are typically getting our clients rates as low as 2 and as high as 5 percent," and "[t]he process usually takes only 60-90 days to complete."
- 33. The text of the landing page has purported to explain that Audit Defendants obtain these favorable results, in part, by conducting a "300 point audit looking for any state or federal violations that may have been committed on your loan paperwork." This loan audit supposedly provides Audit Defendants

with "leverage because we have something to hold over the bank's head." Audit Defendants have claimed that "[t]he best part of the loan audit is that it is not a shot in the dark thing. 90% of the files we audit have violations."

- 34. Beside this text, and immediately below the headlines touting results, the web site has included testimonials of purported FFLM customers, identified only by first name and last initial, purporting to illustrate these results.
- 35. These testimonials have also appeared verbatim including the first name and last initial of the supposed consumer on several unrelated loan modification web sites, and on HHR's web site, all of which have claimed that the companies operating those web sites helped the same supposed consumers obtain a loan modification.
- 36. To enhance their credibility, Audit Defendants' web site has included a large, colorful seal indicating that FFLM is an "NHLA ACCREDITED MORTGAGE ADVOCATE." In the text of the landing page, Audit Defendants have explained that NHLA is:

the National Home Loan Advocates Association. They are a regulatory body in the loan modification industry to insure only the highest standards and practices are being performed. They have an A rating with the BBB. We also have Zero complaints anywhere.

37. NHLA is not a "regulatory body" but is instead a now-defunct private MARS provider. The company has an "F" rating with the BBB and no active web site. Moreover, contrary to Audit Defendants' claim, consumers who have called the toll-free number listed on the FFLM web site have not reached an organization called FFLM, but have instead reached Audit Defendants' HHR or MHS operations, which have numerous complaints against them.

HouseHoldRelief.Org Web Site

38. Beginning on or about October 2009 and continuing through

approximately October 2011, Audit Defendants also operated the web site HouseHoldRelief.org.

- 39. Like FFLM, the landing page of HHR's web site claimed that Audit Defendants had "setup [sic] relationships with various outside third parties who have been generous enough to donate the resources necessary for us to help homeowners get a loan modification absolutely **FREE!**" The landing page also claimed that "the products offered by HouseHoldRelief.org are completed upfront allowing the homeowner to understand exactly all of their options with **NO RISK!**" The web site explained that HHR's free products included a "CONSUMER FRAUD REPORT," "MORTGAGE COMPLIANCE REPORT," and "ATTORNEY REVIEW."
- 40. The web site further claimed, on the landing page, that "[u]sing the tools outlined in this package have been proven to increase your chances of obtaining a modification by as much as 40%." In addition, the web site advised consumers that "[a] typical loan modification application can take anywhere from 30 to 180 days to complete."
- 41. The HHR web site included no disclosure that Audit Defendants charge typically between \$795 and \$1595 for the loan audit, payable before services begin.
- 42. The HHR web site also offered five testimonials illustrating the purportedly favorable results it had obtained for consumers. These included three testimonials that also appeared on the FreeFedLoanMod.org web site. The two additional testimonials on HHR's web site also appeared on several other loan modification web sites, which have claimed that the companies operating those web sites helped the supposed consumers obtain a loan modification.
- 43. The HHR web site also touted Defendants' credibility and expertise, and discouraged consumers from contacting their lenders on their own to pursue a loan modification. In a large, color headline, the web site urged consumers,

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- "Don't Do It Yourself!" The ensuing text stated that "[d]ealing with the mortgage lender takes years of experience" and "[1]enders know that the average homeowner does not have the financial knowledge needed in order to successfully arrange for a proper modification and therefore prey on those homeowners." Audit Defendants further advised that consumers should "not attempt to contact your lender about a Loan Modification until you are fully educated about the process. The lender is a debt collector-any information that you give them can be used against you at a later date to collect on that debt."
- 44. Audit Defendants claimed on the HHR web site that they have "[o]ver one hundred years of industry experience with the tactics and what goes on behind the scenes with your lender."
- 45. To further enhance its credibility, the HHR web site advised consumers to "Avoid Foreclosure Scams" and included a large, colorful seal indicating that HHR is an "NHLA ACCREDITED MORTGAGE ADVOCATE," and an explanation that "I have earned and maintain my NHLA Accreditation [which] commits me to honest and transparent practices."

### MyHomeSupport Web Site

- Beginning on or about April 2011 and continuing to the present, Audit Defendants also have operated the web site MyHomeSupport.org. Using language similar to that used by FFLM and HHR, the web site has claimed that "MyHomeSupport.org has setup [sic] relationships with various outside Third Parties, Mortgage Professionals, and Attorneys who have been generous enough to donate their time and resources necessary for us to help homeowners get a loan modification absolutely **FREE!**"
- 47. The web site's landing page has represented that "MyHomeSupport offers a **FREE** Loan Modification Service" and that "MyHomeSupport.org was created to do Loan Modification at **NO CHARGE**... we don't have any Audits, Gimmicks, Analysis Reports, Hidden Fees, or Tricks... we are simply here to

- 48. The MHS web site has included no disclosure that Audit Defendants charge typically between \$795 and \$1595 for a loan audit, payable before any services begin.
- 49. Like the FFLM web site, it has included claims that Audit Defendants' services will result in, among other things, a "Permanent Interest Rate Reduction," "Step Interest Rate Reduction," and "Principal Balance Reduction."
- 50. Adjacent to these claims have appeared testimonials of supposed MHS consumers purporting to illustrate the favorable results obtained by MHS. These testimonials have appeared, verbatim but for the name of the organization, on at least one other web site purporting to offer loan modification services. That website, www.HomeAffordableRelief.org, has been registered to Joseph Longo, who is or has been a sales representative of HouseHoldRelief.org and Precision Law Center.
- 51. Using language identical to the HHR website, MHS also has told consumers that "[t]he process typically takes anywhere from 60-180 days."

  Audit Defendants' Deceptive Telephone Sales Pitch
- 52. In numerous instances, consumers who have called the toll free numbers listed on the FFLM, HHR, and MHS web sites, submitted personal information on those websites, or received outbound telemarketing calls, have spoken with Audit Defendants' telephone sales representatives. Consumers calling FFLM, HHR, or MHS have spoken with representatives identifying themselves as being with either HHR or MHS, regardless of which one of Audit

Defendants' web sites provided the toll-free number.

- 53. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants' representatives have made similar sales pitches that initially have reinforced the claims made on the web sites, including that Audit Defendants are a free, non-profit service that can significantly increase the likelihood that consumers will obtain a loan modification or stop foreclosure.
- 54. Audit Defendants' representatives have begun their sales pitch by claiming that Audit Defendants are a "dot org because we are funded by various third party companies and agencies." In numerous instances, Audit Defendants' representatives have explained that Audit Defendants are "funded" to provide a complete loan modification for free. They have explained that this includes preparation of a financial or loan modification package for submission to the lender, an appraisal of the consumer's home through a government-accredited company, attorney review of the package, attorney negotiations if necessary, and a property tax assessment.
- 55. Audit Defendants' representatives also have sought to create a sense of urgency for consumers to sign up for Audit Defendants' service. Audit Defendants have claimed in numerous instances that their funding only allows them to perform between 500 and 1000 modifications per month and that they therefore must be "selective" in the consumers they accept.
- 56. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants' representatives have explained that they "force" lenders to agree to modifications by performing a "forensic loan audit" or "consumer fraud report" to identify regulatory or contractual violations that will allow Audit Defendants to threaten the lender with a lawsuit if it does not agree to a loan modification. Audit Defendants' representatives have claimed that the "consumer fraud report is a questionnaire the government put out."
  - 57. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants' representatives have told

consumers it is virtually certain that the loan audit will find violations that will lead to a loan modification. Audit Defendants' representatives have made the following typical and illustrative statements:

- "We only need one violation, but we normally pull 8 to 12 violations per contract. When we get the audit back, we'll contact your lender and give them two choices. We can either take them to court . . . or they can give you the loan modification. . . . Of course, none of the lenders will go to court because they lose every time."
- "The vast majority of loans written between 2000 and 2009 had violations. . . . Now of course, none of the lenders are going to want to go to court when they see that they can lose."
- 58. In some instances, Audit Defendants' telephone sales representatives have claimed to identify violations during the initial sales call, without having reviewed any documents, such as in the following typical and illustrative statement:
  - "So, did B of A ever call you to come into the office and sign new disclosures and new RESPAs because of the truth-inlending laws because there was new fees attached? . . . Well, there's violations – there is violations right there, okay?"
- 59. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants' sales representatives have made numerical claims regarding their success rate in obtaining loan modifications for consumers. For example, after one consumer had identified her lender as Bank of America, Audit Defendants' sales representative made the following typical and illustrative statement: "I was hoping you would tell me that. Oh, that's good news. . . . 100 percent of our loan mods get done by them."
- 60. In another instance, Audit Defendants' sales representative made the typical and illustrative statement that if a consumer used Audit Defendants' service, "you get a you know, 90 percent chance of getting it done." The

representative claimed that, in comparison, if the consumer attempted to obtain a

In numerous other instances, Audit Defendants have claimed their

In numerous instances, Audit Defendants' sales representatives have

After making these success claims, in numerous instances, Audit

loan modification by herself, "you've got like a 2 percent chance of getting it

success rate in obtaining loan modifications was in the high 90th percentile.

claimed that "we do such a prolific job on the consumer fraud report and the

appraisal, we normally don't even need attorneys, but if you need them, they're

Defendants' representatives have informed consumers that the consumer fraud

report and/or forensic loan audit is the only service not "funded" by third-parties

as part of Audit Defendants' "free" loan modification service. Audit Defendants'

representatives have then requested up-front payment of between \$795 and \$1595

done and like . . . a 12-month waiting period."

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there for you free of charge."

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for the consumer fraud report and/or forensic loan audit.

64. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants' representatives have emphasized that there is little or no risk to consumers in purchasing the consumer fraud report and/or forensic loan audit because if these inquiries do not turn up at

- fraud report and/or forensic loan audit because if these inquiries do not turn up at least one violation, Audit Defendants will refund 70 percent of the consumer's fee and still continue with the loan modification.
- 65. Audit Defendants' representatives also have claimed that they would not take money from consumers unless Audit Defendants first determined that the consumers "qualified" for a loan modification, as in the following typical and illustrative statement:

"[B]efore I would take one dime from you, I want to make sure you qualify. . . . There are no gray areas. Either you qualify or you don't. If you qualify, only then we'll decide to bring you aboard as our client because we don't bring just anybody on board."

- 66. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants have purported to "qualify" consumers for a loan modification by asking some basic questions about the consumers' finances and mortgage payments, and then telling consumers, "Okay, you definitely do qualify."
- 67. In numerous instances, after only collecting basic financial information from consumers on an initial phone conversation, Audit Defendants' representatives have claimed that consumers could expect to receive an interest rate reduction, a principal reduction, a fixed rate mortgage, or all of these.
- 68. Audit Defendants' representatives have called consumers to follow up after the initial telephone sales pitch to tell consumers that Audit Defendants have "worked out a payment of principal and interest" and then quoted a specific monthly dollar amount without ever having contacted consumers' lenders. Audit Defendants' representatives have made the typical and illustrative statement, "you'll never get this on your own," and claimed that consumers' interest rate "could go even lower to 2 percent."
- 69. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants have told consumers that if they forego purchasing the consumer fraud report or forensic loan audit, their loan modification request will be seriously delayed and significantly less likely to succeed.
- 70. Audit Defendants' representatives have made numerous typical and illustrative statements to this effect, including that if the consumer did not purchase these services, "there's about a 60-day waiting period wait to start the file because you can imagine how many homeowners we need to help right now." Audit Defendants' representatives also have stated that "generic packages can sometimes take seven, eight, nine months or longer," while packages with a fraud report are "typically a three to four-month process." Audit Defendants' representatives also have claimed that purchasing the consumer fraud report

"increases the chance of getting a modification about 60 percent higher than just a generic package."

- 71. Audit Defendants have sought in numerous instances to further inspire confidence in their expertise and bolster their credibility by claiming that Audit Defendants were HUD certified when they were not.
- 72. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants have cautioned consumers to stay away from other, purportedly fraudulent, operators. In one typical and illustrative statement to this effect, Audit Defendants' representative claimed that "[t]his company is the only company I know that actually does what it says. . . . We're going to probably be the only modification company in existence after a couple of weeks. They'll all be shut down, new laws."
- 73. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants' representatives have recommended that consumers skip making mortgage payments.
- 74. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants' representatives have discouraged consumers from communicating directly with their lenders.
- 75. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants' representatives have told consumers that Audit Defendants would obtain the loan documents necessary to perform the forensic loan audit from consumers' lenders.
- 76. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants' representatives have told consumers that Audit Defendants know how to massage the numbers if consumers are making too much income to qualify for a loan modification.

# Audit Defendants' Deceptive Follow-Up Sales Material

- 77. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants have sent, generally by email, additional materials to consumers who have expressed interest, including but not limited to a cover letter, brochure, contract, and purported compliance checklist. These materials have further advanced Audit Defendants' deceptive scheme.
  - 78. Audit Defendants' cover letter has reinforced the claim that they are

a free nonprofit service with credibility and expertise. In numerous instances, the cover letter has reiterated that Audit Defendants are "funded by various third party companies and agencies." It has further claimed that Defendants are "Certified in Foreclosure Intervention and Certified in Default Counseling by Neighborhood Works (HUD Training Program)." Defendants are not certified by HUD or by "Neighborworks," a non-profit community-based organization working in cooperation with HUD and other government agencies. No organization named "Neighborhood Works" is associated with HUD.

- 79. The HHR cover letter also has fostered a sense of urgency for consumers to act. It has purported to identify the position in line of the consumer's application out of 1000 purportedly available slots. In all or virtually all instances, the consumer's place in line is purported to have been in the high 800s or 900s. Audit Defendants have instructed consumers that they must respond "within the next <u>48 HOURS</u> to secure your slot." Audit Defendants have further claimed that "[o]ur company is required to fill all of the allocated slots in order to continue with the funding and urge you to cooperate so that we are able to extend the same service to other homeowner's [sic] in need."
- 80. Audit Defendants have claimed in the cover letter that "[u]sing the tools outlined in this package have been proven to increase your chances of obtaining a modification by as much as 40%."
- 81. To further enhance Audit Defendants' credibility, the brochure has included several testimonials touting favorable results, including one that appears verbatim, or almost verbatim, on 36 web sites, including numerous loan modification or debt relief web sites, and another that appears verbatim, or almost verbatim, on 15 web sites, including numerous loan modification or debt relief web sites.
- 82. The brochure has included no disclosure that the results described in the testimonials are not typical of Audit Defendants' customers seeking loan

modifications. Instead, the brochure has claimed that "[t]ypically adjustments range from 1-3% in overall interest rate reduction. This drops the payment drastically allowing for new found comfort with your personal housing expenses."

- 83. The package Audit Defendants have sent to consumers also has included an "Assistance Agreement," which has reiterated, notwithstanding Audit Defendants' request for up-front payment, that Audit Defendants' "services are to be performed free of charge for the undersigned Client" and that "HHR is not charging for the services of a loan modification in any way shape or form."
- 84. The package also has included an "Addendum to Assistance Agreement," pre-signed in the name of the consumer with an "electronic" signature, purporting to certify certain statements that contradict the express representations made up to that point by Audit Defendants. These false certifications include, among others, the statements that "I was not told a specific success rate," "I was not promised a specific result," and "I was not told to miss a mortgage payment."
- 85. Audit Defendants also have sent consumers official-looking "samples" of a consumer fraud report and forensic loan audit and have sent follow-up emails claiming that if such an audit uncovers violations or noncompliance on the part of the lender, then "you can expect a Loan Modification."

#### **B.** The Mass Joinder Scam

86. Mass Joinder Defendants Lakhany, Precision Law Center, Inc., and Precision Law Center LLC have operated Precision Law Center ("PLC"), a company that purports to be a law firm. Through PLC, Mass Joinder Defendants have engaged in a course of conduct to advertise, market, offer to sell, and sell to homeowners the opportunity to participate in mass joinder litigation against their lenders. PLC has represented that among other things, consumers can stop

- 87. In numerous instances, PLC has initiated contact with consumers by sending them a deceptive direct-mail solicitation. In other instances, Mass Joinder Defendants have attempted to up-sell the services of PLC to customers of FFLM, HHR, or MHS for whom Audit Defendants failed to obtain a loan modification.
- 88. Mass Joinder Defendants' direct mail solicitation contains an official-looking form that resembles a federal tax form or a class action settlement notice. Mass Joinder Defendants have sent the mailer to consumers by U.S. Mail using a blue, orange, and white color envelope that resembles a Federal Express overnight package. The envelope states, in large color text, "ExpressPak Service," and includes several prominent statements indicating, expressly or by implication, that it contains important legal materials:
  - \*\*\*Time Sensitive Material\*\*\*
    REGISTERED CERTIFIED DOCUMENT
  - LEGAL NOTICE PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL
  - OPEN IMMEDIATELY

- 89. Inside, the envelope has contained a single-page document that purports to be a "FORM 1012-R, LITIGATION SETTLEMENT NOTIFICATION." On the upper left corner of the page, in a font and position similar to the four-digit identification number used on federal tax forms has been the date, "2011."
- 90. The mailer has identified the consumer's mortgage lender by name, set forth the consumer's loan amount, and indicated that it is a "FINAL NOTICE" relating to, as in one case, a "LITIGATION SETTLEMENT VS WASHINGTON MUTUAL BANK FA." The form prominently has featured a box that lists the "Status" as "Eligible-Pending."
  - 91. In two places, the mailer has included text appearing above graphic

lines, setting it apart from the rest of the page, that states:

YOU ARE A POTENTIAL PLAINTIFF IN LAWSUIT VS. WASHINGTON MUTUAL BANK FA

#### ----- MULTI PARTY LAWSUIT -----

#### 92. The mailer has explained:

Your loan with **WASHINGTON MUTUAL BANK FA** may be eligible for an inclusion into a national litigation settlement aimed at fraudulent lender actions.

You will become a joined named plaintiff in a national lawsuit that will seek, among other things, to stop foreclosure, new loan terms and/or to award you relief and monetary damages.

- 93. The mailer has concluded with a box at the bottom of the page containing the text "IMMEDIATE RESPONSE REQUIRED" followed by a toll-free number.
- 94. PLC also has marketed its purported services through a website that claims PLC is a "full service law firm" and that its attorneys are "highly skilled" in a variety of practice areas including "Commercial & Business Litigation" and "Real Estate." The web site has claimed that "we have assembled an aggressive and talented team of litigators to address the lenders in a Court of Law." It further has claimed that "[o]ver the last several years this firm has diligently worked with mortgage lenders to achieve affordable loan restructuring solutions for our clients."
- 95. In fact, at relevant times, PLC has had either no attorneys or only one attorney representing all of its clients from various states. The attorney who signed the lawsuits PLC filed against consumers' lenders passed the California bar in March 2009. He is not listed as a member of the bar in the other states in which PLC's clients have resided.
- 96. The web site has made claims about the outcomes consumers may expect if they hire PLC, including:

In our expert opinion, a case like this is likely to have one of the two following outcomes: 1) there could be a trial Settlement - This is the most likely due to the fact that any Lender would be at a disadvantage with a jury trial. If this were to take place our settlement demand would include a favorable modification as well as compensatory damages. 2) Amnesty Program - Just like the tobacco industry, the Lending industry could receive amnesty from the Government. If this were to take place, only those plaintiffs already party to the lawsuit will be eligible for a settlement.

- 97. The web site also has made claims about what the consumer's "settlement demand will stipulate." These include "Principal Reduced to 80% of Current Market Value," "Forgiveness of Past Payments and Misc Fees," "Credit Report to show NO LATE PAYMENTS," and "Forty (40) Year Mortgage Term."
- 98. Additionally, under a bold headline stating, "Rate based on lowest Fannie Mae 30 Year," the web site has told consumers that "your new rate, at the time of settlement, will be based on the going Fannie Mae 30 year loan rate. This rate will be a bare bone base rate with no commissions, hidden fees, or balloon payments."
- 99. Without having obtained any information specific to any individual consumer, the web site has made the blanket claim that "[d]ue to the complexity of this case and the different parties/parameters involved, we estimate that this case will take approximately 18-24 months to settle."
- 100. Other portions of the PLC website have included significant amounts of text that appears verbatim, or nearly verbatim, on the FFLM, HHR, and MHS websites.
  - 101. The PLC web site has urged consumers to submit personal

- 102. In numerous instances, PLC also has marketed to consumers whom FFLM, HHR, and MHS have failed to assist. In at least one instance, a consumer who demanded a refund of the \$1595 he had paid HHR was instead given only the option of having this amount applied as a "down payment" toward joining a planned PLC lawsuit against his lender. The consumer was told that he would have to pay \$10,000 to join the lawsuit.
- 103. In numerous instances, consumers who have called the toll free number listed on the "Form 1012-R," have submitted personal information on the PLC web site, or have been referred to PLC after Audit Defendants failed to obtain a loan modification, have spoken with a PLC representative.
- 104. PLC's representatives have urged consumers to buy their way into a PLC "mass joinder" lawsuit by paying typically \$6000 to \$10,000. These representatives have reinforced the claims made in PLC's direct mail solicitation and on its website.
- 105. After an initial sales pitch, PLC's representatives have sent consumers marketing materials making further specific claims regarding the outcome PLC will obtain if the consumer hires the law firm. In one typical and illustrative email, a non-attorney representative made the following claims:

#### **OUTCOME:** (This is the Minimum Settlement you will receive)

- 18-24 Month Process (UP THE [sic] HOME OWNER TO MAKE PAYMENTS OR NOT)
- Lender can not Foreclose (Active Litigation and Lis Pendens)
- 40 or 30 Year loan term
- Interest rate and going Fannie Mae 30yr Rate (approx 4%)
- 80% of current market value (AVM)
- Forgiveness of all past due payments
- Forgiveness of all miscellaneous fees

1	<ul> <li>Restoration of Credit showing no late payments</li> </ul>										
2	<ul> <li>Possible compensatory damages</li> </ul>										
3	106. In materials attached to this typical and illustrative email to a										
4	consumer whose home and residence was in Connecticut, Mass Joinder										
5	Defendants claimed that he could become part of a mass-joinder suit "[f]iled in										
6	LA Superior Court."										
7	107. PLC further claimed to be "Allowed to Accept Retainer Fees"										
8	because it was "Not Covered by FTC," and there were "No State Restrictions"										
9	and "No DRE Jurisdiction."										
10	108. In other instances, PLC has sent materials to consumers that include										
11	deceptive claims that are either tailored to the specific consumer or general with										
12	respect to mass joinder litigation.										
13	109. In one typical and illustrative package of materials, PLC included a										
14	one-page "Settlement Worksheet" with a box titled "Proposed Resolution" that										
15	included the following claims tailored to the consumer's specific loan:										
16	PROPOSED LOAN TERM: 30 Years										
17	PROPOSED LOAN BALANCE (80% of market value): \$135,200.00										
18	PROPOSED RATE: 2% Fixed										
19	PROPOSED PAYMENT: \$500.00										
20	110. The worksheet included another box titled "Additional Terms" that										
21	included the following statements:										
22	• Forgiveness of all delinquent payments, fees and $\square$ penalties										
23	ullet Halt and reverse foreclosure proceedings										
24	● Credit restoration ☑										
<ul><li>25</li><li>26</li></ul>	• Possible compensatory damages in the amount of \$22,500.00										
27	• Possible punitive damages in the amount of $$52,500.00$										
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111. Mass Joinder Defendants also have included with materials sent to consumers, PowerPoint-style presentations making general claims about the benefits of mass-joinder litigation. The presentations have included claims about the success rate of the lawsuits and what consumers can expect to win in the lawsuit:

#### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### How often are these suits successful?

\* 80% to 85% of classified mass joinders receive a successful result on behalf of the participants.

#### What kind of monetary damages can I expect?

- \* Upon a successful settlement or adjudication you may receive anywhere from a small settlement to several thousands of dollars. You may also receive a very large principal balance reduction on the home which would give you instant equity in your home.
- WHAT CAN I EXPECT TO WIN WITH THIS LAWSUIT?
  - \* Potentially Receiving Your Home Free and Clear.
  - \* A Reduction In Your Homes Principle [sic] Balance to 70% of the Current Value
  - \* Reducing the Interest Rate to 50% Of The Current Interest Rate.
  - \* Elimination and Potential Refund of Any Accrued Interest, Penalties and Charges
  - \* Elimination of Any Negative Reporting to the Credit Reporting Agencies.
  - \* Compensatory and Punitive Damage (Monetary Damages).
  - \* 40 Year Fixed Rate Term On The Loan.

Potential Foreclosure Protection During The Law
 Suit.
 Potential Revisions Regarding The Grant Deed of The

Home.

- \* Ability to Continue Litigation in the Future Should Additional Issues Arise.
- 112. PLC has filed at least seven mass-joinder complaints in Los Angeles County Superior Court. In each case, PLC has failed to do anything to advance consumers' cases after filing the complaint.
- 113. The docket for the Los Angeles Superior Court reflects that in five cases, PLC failed to serve the complaint on the defendants, resulting in the dismissal of three cases and orders to show cause why sanctions should not be imposed for failure to serve the summons and complaint in two. PLC has not appeared for hearings and has not otherwise responded to the orders to show cause.
- 114. Of the two remaining cases, one was dismissed when PLC failed to oppose Defendants' motions to dismiss and for judgment on the pleadings. The other, which was filed in July 2011, is listed as "pending" with no docket entry reflecting service or any other action by PLC.
- 115. These seven mass-joinder complaints collectively purport to represent the interests of 186 consumers. Many of these consumers, whose homes have been in foreclosure, may not know their complaints have been dismissed, in light of PLC's representations that the successful results of its lawsuits would take 18-24 months.
- 116. The FTC is aware of no other lawsuits filed by PLC. *Consumer Injury*
- 117. In numerous instances, consumers who have paid Forensic Loan Audit and Mass Joinder Defendants' fees have suffered significant economic

- 118. In numerous instances, after consumers have paid Forensic Loan Audit and Mass Joinder Defendants their requested advance fee, Forensic Loan Audit and Mass Joinder Defendants have failed to obtain a loan modification or stop foreclosure.
- 119. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants have failed to conduct consumer fraud reports or forensic loan audits that provided the leverage Audit Defendants promised would force banks to agree to a loan modification.
- 120. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants have failed to obtain documents from consumers' lenders as promised to conduct these reports and audits, have failed to submit necessary paperwork to consumers' lenders to request loan modifications, and have engaged in little or no effective communications with consumers lenders. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants have falsely blamed consumers for failing to provide requested information.
- 121. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants have failed to provide free legal services or many of the other services they claimed would be provided for free.
- 122. In numerous instances, consumers who have paid Audit Defendants' requested up-front fee have received the run-around. Audit Defendants have failed to return consumers' phone calls and emails, and consumers have been transferred from one agent to another.
- 123. In numerous instances, Audit Defendants have refused to refund consumers' up-front fees. Instead, they have claimed to have identified lender "violations," making the consumer ineligible for a refund under Audit Defendants' policy. In numerous instances, however, these purported "violations" have not provided the leverage Audit Defendants promised would

force banks to agree to a loan modification.

#### Role of Individual Defendant Lakhany

- 124. Sameer Lakhany, acting individually or in concert with others, has formulated, directed, controlled, had the authority to control, and participated in the acts and practices of the Corporate Defendants, as well as FreeFedLoanMod.org, HouseHoldRelief.org, and MyHomeSupport.org.
- 125. Although neither FFLM, HHR, nor MHS is a proper corporate entity, each is a registered or non-registered fictitious business identity controlled by Lakhany, through which he and his interrelated maze of companies has operated.
- 126. Lakhany is the director and agent for service of process for Fidelity Legal, the limited liability company that created and has maintained the web sites and toll-free telephone numbers used by FFLM, HHR, and MHS. Lakhany has paid for these accounts with his credit card and is identified as the contact person for the accounts. Lakhany also has written checks on Fidelity Legal's bank account.
- 127. Lakhany is the organizer and agent for service of process of Credit Shop, the limited liability company that owns the fictitious business name HouseHoldRelief.org. Lakhany's signature appears on the company's articles of organization.
- 128. Lakhany is CEO and agent for service of process of Titanium Realty, a corporation that has maintained a bank account in the name "Titanium Realty dba HouseHoldRelief.org." Nearly 400 consumer payments for HHR loan modification services were deposited to the account during a three month period in 2010. Titanium Realty also has written checks to employees of HHR.
- 129. Lakhany has identified himself to prospective employees as the actual owner of Precision Law Center. Although Lakhany has asserted that he is not listed as the "paper" owner of Precision Law Center because he is not an

attorney, Lakhany is listed in corporate registration documents as the incorporator of Precision Law Center, Inc. and signed its articles of incorporation. Lakhany's email address is listed with Precision Law Center's web site registration, and his credit card has paid for at least one of the phone numbers used by Precision Law Center. Lakhany also makes hiring decisions for Precision Law Center.

- 130. Lakhany is actively involved in the Corporate Defendants' and fictitious businesses' day-to-day operations.
- 131. For example, he has sent emails to consumers and HHR staff confirming that HouseHoldRelief.org had received the consumers' payment for services. Additionally, at least one consumer, on at least two occasions, emailed Lakhany directly at slakhany@householdrelief.org to describe her numerous problems with HHR and ask for his assistance. An email dated March 1, 2011 from the consumer contains the subject line "dishonorable business practice!" This, and a second email dated March 13, 2011, detailed Audit Defendants' deceptive business practices and requested a refund.
- 132. Lakhany also has created and disseminated false and misleading materials to rebut HHR's negative Better Business Bureau ("BBB") rating, further illustrating his awareness of consumer complaints about HHR. Lakhany has created a fake BBB website apparently to divert consumers from the real BBB website, which gave HHR an "F" rating. Lakhany has been listed as the domain registrant of "www.labbbb.org" which has four b's in its web address instead of the three contained in the Los Angeles area BBB's legitimate web address. The website has what appears to be a BBB ratings page for HHR and purports to award the company a "B-" rating.
- 133. Lakhany also has sent emails from his address at "slakhany@householdrelief.org" to the HHR sales staff with links to negative press reports about the BBB. These emails, and the links, have been forwarded to

- 134. In April 2010, the State of Washington, Department of Financial Institutions, ordered that Lakhany and Fidelity Legal cease and desist offering loan modification services and otherwise conducting the business of a mortgage broker in the state of Washington. Despite this, Lakhany and Fidelity Legal have continued such activity in violation of the State of Washington's Order.
- 135. The fictitious business identities and complex web of corporations through which Lakhany has operated obfuscate the true identities of the companies with which consumers transact and place consumers at a disadvantage.

#### **VIOLATIONS OF THE FTC ACT**

- 136. Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a), prohibits "unfair or deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce."
- 137. Misrepresentations or deceptive omissions of material fact constitute deceptive acts or practices prohibited by Section 5(a) of the FTC Act.

#### **COUNT I**

#### (All Defendants)

- 138. In numerous instances, in connection with the offering and sale of mortgage assistance relief services, Defendants have represented, expressly or by implication, that they generally will obtain for consumers mortgage loan modifications that will make consumers' payments substantially more affordable, or will help consumers avoid foreclosure.
- 139. In truth and in fact, Defendants generally do not obtain for consumers mortgage loan modifications that will make consumers' payments substantially more affordable, and generally do not help consumers avoid foreclosure.
- 140. Therefore, Defendants' representation as set forth in Paragraph 138 is false and misleading and constitutes a deceptive act or practice in violation of

Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S. C. § 45(a).

#### **COUNT II**

#### (Audit Defendants)

- 141. In numerous instances, in connection with the offering and sale of mortgage assistance relief services, Audit Defendants have represented, expressly or by implication, that as a result of a loan audit provided by Audit Defendants, they generally will obtain for consumers mortgage loan modifications that will make consumers' payments substantially more affordable.
- 142. In truth and in fact, Audit Defendants generally do not obtain for consumers mortgage loan modifications that will make consumers' mortgage payments substantially more affordable as a result of a loan audit provided by Audit Defendants.
- 143. Therefore, Audit Defendants' representation as set forth in Paragraph 141 is false and misleading and constitutes a deceptive act or practice in violation of Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S. C. § 45(a).

#### COUNT III

#### (Audit Defendants)

- 144. In numerous instances, in connection with the offering and sale of mortgage assistance relief services, Audit Defendants have represented, directly or indirectly, expressly or by implication, that Audit Defendants are accredited non-profit organizations with superior qualifications and techniques for obtaining mortgage loan modifications that will make consumers' payments substantially more affordable.
- 145. In truth and in fact, Audit Defendants are not accredited non-profit organizations with superior qualifications and techniques for obtaining mortgage loan modifications that will make consumers' payments substantially more affordable.
  - 146. Therefore, Audit Defendants' representation as set forth in

Paragraph 144 is false and misleading and constitutes a deceptive act or practice in violation of Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a).

#### COUNT IV

#### (Audit Defendants)

- 147. In numerous instances, in connection with the offering and sale of mortgage assistance relief services, Audit Defendants have represented, directly or indirectly, expressly or by implication, that Audit Defendants will generally provide refunds to consumers if Audit Defendants fail to obtain a mortgage loan modification.
- 148. In truth and in fact, Audit Defendants do not generally provide refunds to consumers when Audit Defendants fail to obtain a mortgage loan modification.
- 149. Therefore, Audit Defendants' representation as set forth in Paragraph 147 is false and misleading and constitutes a deceptive act or practice in violation of Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a).

#### COUNT V

#### (Mass Joinder Defendants)

- 150. In numerous instances, in connection with the offering and sale of mortgage assistance relief services, Mass Joinder Defendants have represented, directly or indirectly, expressly or by implication, that Mass Joinder Defendants generally will obtain favorable mortgage concessions from consumers' lenders or stop foreclosure if consumers join mass joinder lawsuits initiated by Mass Joinder Defendants.
- 151. In truth and in fact, Mass Joinder Defendants do not generally obtain favorable mortgage concessions from consumers' lenders or stop foreclosure for consumers who join the Mass Joinder Defendants' mass joinder lawsuits.
- 152. Therefore, Mass Joinder Defendants' representation as set forth in Paragraph 150 is false and misleading and constitutes a deceptive act or practice

in violation of Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a).

#### THE MARS RULE

- 153. In 2009, Congress directed the FTC to prescribe rules prohibiting unfair or deceptive acts or practices with respect to mortgage loans. Omnibus Act, § 626, 123 Stat. at 678, as clarified by Credit Card Act, § 511, 123 Stat. at 1763-64. Pursuant to that direction, the FTC promulgated the MARS Rule, 16 C.F.R. Part 322, all but one of the provisions of which became effective on December 29, 2010. The remaining provision, Section 322.5, became effective on January 31, 2011. The Dodd-Frank Act, § 1097, 124 Stat. at 2102-03, 12 U.S.C. § 5538, transferred rulemaking authority over the MARS Rule to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which recodified the Rule as 12 C.F.R. Part 1015 effective December 30, 2011, and designated it "Regulation O." The FTC retains authority to enforce the MARS Rule pursuant to Dodd-Frank Act § 1097, 12 U.S.C. § 5538.
- 154. The MARS Rule and Regulation O define "mortgage assistance relief provider" as "any person that provides, offers to provide, or arranges for others to provide, any mortgage assistance relief service" other than the dwelling loan holder, the servicer of a dwelling loan, or any agent or contractor of such individual or entity. 16 C.F.R. § 322.2, recodified as 12 C.F.R. § 1015.2.
- 155. Defendants are "mortgage assistance relief provider[s]" engaged in the provision of "mortgage assistance relief services" as those terms are defined in the MARS Rule, 16 C.F.R. § 322.2, recodified as Regulation O, 12 C.F.R. § 1015.2.
- 156. The MARS Rule and Regulation O prohibit any mortgage assistance relief service provider from misrepresenting, expressly or by implication, the likelihood of negotiating, obtaining, or arranging any represented service or result. 16 C.F.R. § 322.3(b)(1), recodified as 12 C.F.R. § 1015.3(b)(1).
  - 157. The MARS Rule and Regulation O prohibit any mortgage assistance

relief service provider from failing to place a statement in every general commercial communication disclosing that (i) the provider is not associated with the government and its service is not approved by the government or any lender, and (ii) in certain cases, a statement disclosing that the lender may not agree to modify a loan, even if the consumer uses the provider's service. 16 C.F.R. §§ 322.4(a)(1)-(2), recodified as 12 C.F.R. §§ 1015.4(a)(1)-(2).

- 158. The MARS Rule and Regulation O prohibit any mortgage assistance relief service provider from failing to place a statement in every consumer-specific commercial communication (i) confirming that the consumer may stop doing business with the provider or reject an offer of mortgage assistance without having to pay for the services, (ii) disclosing that the provider is not associated with the government and its service is not approved by the government or any lender, and (iii) in certain cases, a statement disclosing that the lender may not agree to modify a loan, even if the consumer uses the provider's service. 16 C.F.R. §§ 322.4(b)(1)-(3), recodified as 12 C.F.R. §§ 1015.4(b)(1)-(3).
- 159. The MARS Rule and Regulation O prohibit any mortgage assistance relief service provider, in cases where the provider has represented that the consumer should temporarily or permanently discontinue payments on a dwelling loan, from failing to place a statement in every consumer-specific commercial communication clearly and prominently, and in close proximity to any such representation, that the consumer could lose his or her home and damage his or her credit rating if the consumer stops paying the mortgage. 16 C.F.R. § 322.4(c), recodified as 12 C.F.R. § 1015.4(c).
- 160. The MARS Rule and Regulation O prohibit any mortgage assistance relief service provider from requesting or receiving payment of any fee or other consideration until the consumer has executed a written agreement between the consumer and the consumer's loan holder or servicer that incorporates the offer that the provider obtained from the loan holder or servicer. 16 C.F.R. § 322.5(a),

recodified as 12 C.F.R. § 1015.5(a).

161. Pursuant to the Omnibus Act, § 626, 123 Stat. at 678, as clarified by the Credit Card Act, § 511, 123 Stat. at 1763-64 and amended by the Dodd-Frank Act, § 1097, 124 Stat. at 2102-03, 12 U.S.C. § 5538, and pursuant to Section 18(d)(3) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 57a(d)(3), a violation of the MARS Rule or Regulation O constitutes an unfair or deceptive act or practice in or affecting commerce, in violation of Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a).

# VIOLATIONS OF THE MARS RULE

#### COUNT VI

(All Defendants)

- 162. In numerous instances, in the course of providing mortgage assistance relief services, Defendants have misrepresented, expressly or by implication, material aspects of their services, including, but not limited to:
  - (a) Defendants' likelihood of obtaining a modification of mortgage loans for consumers that will make their payments substantially more affordable;
  - (b) Audit Defendants' likelihood of obtaining a modification of mortgage loans for consumers that will make their payments substantially more affordable as a result of a loan audit provided by Audit Defendants; and
  - (c) Mass Joinder Defendants' likelihood of obtaining a modification of mortgage loans for consumers that will make their payments substantially more affordable or of otherwise obtaining favorable mortgage concessions or stopping foreclosure by placing consumers in a "mass joinder" lawsuit against their lender, in violation of the MARS Rule, 16 C.F.R. § 322.3(b)(1), and Regulation O, 12 C.F.R. § 1015.3(b)(1).

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#### **COUNT VII**

#### (All Defendants)

- 163. In numerous instances, in the course of providing mortgage assistance relief services, Defendants have failed to make the following disclosures:
  - (a) in all general commercial communications –
  - "[Name of Company] is not associated with the (1) government, and our service is not approved by the government or your lender," in violation of the MARS Rule, 16 C.F.R.
  - § 322.4(a)(1), and Regulation O, 12 C.F.R. § 1015.4(a)(1); and
  - "Even if you accept this offer and use our service, your lender may not agree to change your loan," in violation of the MARS Rule, 16 C.F.R. § 322.4(a)(2), and Regulation O, 12 C.F.R. § 1015.4(a)(2);
  - in all consumer-specific commercial communications (b)
  - **(1)** "You may stop doing business with us at any time. You may accept or reject the offer of mortgage assistance we obtain from your lender [or servicer]. If you reject the offer, you do not have to pay us. If you accept the offer, you will have to pay us [insert amount or method for calculating the amount] for our services," in violation of the MARS Rule, 16 C.F.R. § 322.4(b)(1), and Regulation O, 12 C.F.R. § 1015.4(b)(1);
  - (2) "[Name of company] is not associated with the government, and our service is not approved by the government or your lender," in violation of the MARS Rule, 16 C.F.R. § 322.4(b)(2), and Regulation O, 12 C.F.R. § 1015.4(b)(2); and
  - "Even if you accept this offer and use our service, your lender may not agree to change your loan," in violation of the

MARS Rule, 16 C.F.R. § 322.4(b)(3), and Regulation O, 12 C.F.R. § 1015.4(b)(3); and

(c) in all general commercial communications, consumer-specific commercial communications, and other communications in cases where Defendants have represented, expressly or by implication, in connection with the advertising, marketing, promotion, offering for sale, sale, or performance of any mortgage assistance relief service, that the consumer should temporarily or permanently discontinue payments, in whole or in part, on a dwelling loan, clearly and prominently, and in close proximity to any such representation that "If you stop paying your mortgage, you could lose your home and damage your credit rating," in violation of the MARS Rule, 16 C.F.R. § 322.4(c), and Regulation O, 12 C.F.R. § 1015.4(c).

#### **COUNT VIII**

#### (All Defendants)

164. In numerous instances, in the course of providing mortgage assistance relief services, Defendants ask for or receive their payment before consumers have executed a written agreement between the consumer and the loan holder or servicer that incorporates the offer obtained by Defendants, in violation of the MARS Rule, 16 C.F.R. § 322.5(a) and Regulation O, 12 C.F.R. § 1015.5(a).

#### CONSUMER INJURY

165. Consumers have suffered and will continue to suffer substantial injury as a result of Defendants' violations of the FTC Act and the MARS Rule. In addition, Defendants have been unjustly enriched as a result of their unlawful acts or practices. Absent injunctive relief by this Court, Defendants are likely to continue to injure consumers, reap unjust enrichment, and harm the public interest.

#### THIS COURT'S POWER TO GRANT RELIEF

166. Section 13(b) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 53(b), empowers this Court to grant injunctive and such other relief as the Court may deem appropriate to halt and redress violations of any provision of law enforced by the FTC. The Court, in the exercise of its equitable jurisdiction, may award ancillary relief, including rescission or reformation of contracts, restitution, the refund of monies paid, and the disgorgement of ill-gotten monies, to prevent and remedy any violation of any provision of law enforced by the FTC.

167. Section 19 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 57b, and Section 626 of the Omnibus Act authorize this Court to grant such relief as the Court finds necessary to redress injury to consumers resulting from Defendants' violations of the MARS Rule, including rescission and reformation of contracts and the refund of money.

#### PRAYER FOR RELIEF

- 168. Wherefore, Plaintiff Federal Trade Commission, pursuant to Sections 13(b) and 19 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 53(b) and 57b, the Omnibus Act, and the Court's own equitable powers, requests that the Court:
  - (a) Award Plaintiff such preliminary injunctive and ancillary relief as may be necessary to avert the likelihood of consumer injury during the pendency of this action, and to preserve the possibility of effective final relief, including but not limited to a temporary restraining order, a preliminary injunction, an order freezing assets, immediate access, and appointment of a receiver;
  - (b) Enter a permanent injunction to prevent future violations of the FTC Act and the MARS Rule/Regulation O by Defendants;
  - (c) Award such relief as the Court finds necessary to redress injury to consumers resulting from Defendants' violations of the FTC Act and the MARS Rule/Regulation O, including but not limited to

rescission or reformation of contracts, restitution, the refund of 1 monies paid, and the disgorgement of ill-gotten monies; and 2 Award Plaintiff the costs of bringing this action, as well as such (d) 3 other and additional relief as the Court may determine to be just and 4 proper. 5 6 7 Respectfully submitted, Dated: March 5, 2012 8 Willard K. Tom General Counsel 9 10 11 Mark L. Glassman (Phone: 202-326-2826)
(Email: Mglassman@ftc.gov)
Teresa N. Kosmidis
(Phone: 202-326-3216)
(Email: Tkosmidis@ftc.gov) 12 13 14 Soyong Cho (Phone: 202-326-2108)
(Email: Scho@ftc.gov)
Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Mail Stop NJ-3158 15 16 17 Washington, DC 20580 Fax: (202) 326-3768 18 19 John D. Jacobs (Cal. Bar No. 134154) (Phone: 310-824-4343) 20 (Email: Jjacobs@ftc.gov) Federal Trade Commission 10877 Wilshire Boulevard 21 22 Suite 700 Los Angeles, CA 90024 Fax: 310-824-4380 23 24 Attorneys for Plaintiff Federal Trade Commission 25 26 27 28

# ORIGINAL

# UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT, CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA CIVIL COVER SHEET

I (a) PLAINTIFFS (Check box if you are representing yourself □) Federal Trade Commission				DEFENDANTS Sammer Lakhany; The Credit Shop, LLC; Fidelity Legal Services LLC; Titanium Realty, Inc.; Precision Law Center, Inc.; Precision Law Center LLC						
·	ress and Telephone Number. If you will be seen that the seen and Telephone Number. If you will be seen and the seen and	Pennsyl	vania Ave,	ttomeys	(If Known)					
	d, Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA S		1							
II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION (	(Place an X in one box only.)				RINCIPAL PAR'		For Diversity Cases efendant.)	s Only		
1 U.S. Government Plaintiff	☐ 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government No. a Party	)	Citizen of This Sta	ite	PTI	DEF	Incorporated or I		PTF □ 4	DEF
☐ 2 U.S. Government Defendant	☐ 4 Diversity (Indicate Citize of Parties in Item III)	enship	Citizen of Another	r State	□ 2	□ 2	Incorporated and of Business in A		□5	□ 5
			Citizen or Subject	of a Fore	eign Country 🗆 3	□ 3	Foreign Nation		□ 6	□ 6
IV. ORIGIN (Place an X in one b	box only.)									
Original 2 Removed State Cour			instated or 5 opened	Fransferre	ed from another di	strict (sp	Distr	rict Jud	eal to I ge from gistrate	•
V. REQUESTED IN COMPLAI	NT: JURY DEMAND:	es 🗷	No (Check 'Yes' o	only if det	nanded in complai	nt.)				, ,
CLASS ACTION under F.R.C.P.	. 23: □ Yes 🖫 No		□мо	ONEY D	EMANDED IN C	OMPLA	AINT: \$ TRO/PI/o	other equitable	remed	ties
VI. CAUSE OF ACTION (Cite th	he U.S. Civil Statute under which	ch you a	re filing and write	a brief sta	atement of cause.	Do not c	ite jurisdictional st	atutes unless div	ersity.)	
	J.S.C. Section 5538; 12 C.F.R.	Part 101	5				<del> </del>			
VIL NATURE OF SUIT (Place a	an X in one box only.)					,				
OTHER STATUTES  □ 400 State Reapportionment	CONTRACT	97.57	TORTS SONAL INJURY		TORTS PERSONAL	300000000000000000000000000000000000000	PRISONER PETITIONS	LAI □710 Fair La	OR bor Sta	ndards
· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	120 Marine		Airplane Product	B 2000 CO CO	PROPERTY	□ 510	Motions to	Act		
Ÿ I	l 130 Miller Act l 140 Negotiable Instrument	3,3	Liability		Other Fraud Truth in Lending		Vacate Sentence Habeas Corpus	☐ 720 Labor/l Relatio		
Rates/etc. □	150 Recovery of	□ 320	Assault, Libel &		Other Personal		General	□ 730 Labor/l	Mgmt.	
460 Deportation	Overpayment &	□ 330	Slander Fed. Employers'	L	Property Damage			Report		
□ 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt	Enforcement of Judgment		Liability	1⊔ 383	Property Damage Product Liability	□ 540	Mandamus/ Other	Disclos  ☐ 740 Railwa		
	151 Medicare Act		Marine	B≱	NKRUPTCY	☐ 550		☐ 790 Other I		1101
	152 Recovery of Defaulted	□ 343	Marine Product Liability	□ 422	Appeal 28 USC		Prison Condition	Litigati		
□ 490 Cable/Sat TV	Student Loan (Excl.	□ 350	Motor Vehicle		158	S4646636663	RFEITURE/	□ 791 Empl. I		
☐ 810 Selective Service ☐ 850 Securities/Commodities/ ☐	Veterans)	□ 355	Motor Vehicle	LI 423	Withdrawal 28 USC 157		PENALTY Agriculture	Securit PROPERT		nre
Exchange	Overpayment of	C 260	Product Liability	- CI	VIL RIGHTS		Other Food &	□ 820 Copyri		( <b>4</b> (4 (4 (4 (4 (4 (4 (4 (4 (4 (4 (4 (4 (4
□ 875 Customer Challenge 12	Veteran's Benefits	360	Other Personal Injury	□ 441	Voting		Drug	□ 830 Patent	<b>,</b>	
	160 Stockholders' Suits	□ 362	Personal Injury-		Employment	□ 625	Drug Related	□ 840 Tradem		steen artest
,	190 Other Contract		Med Malpractice	□ 443	Housing/Acco-		Seizure of	SOCIAL S		ΓY
- I	195 Contract Product	□ 365	Personal Injury-	D 444	mmodations Welfare	Ì	Property 21 USC 881			121
□ 892 Economic Stabilization Act □	Liability 196 Franchise	□ 368	Product Liability Asbestos Personal	ł	American with	□ 630	Liquor Laws	☐ 862 Black L ☐ 863 DIWC/		23)
□ 893 Environmental Matters	REAL PROPERTY		Injury Product		Disabilities -	•	R.R. & Truck	(405(g)		
	210 Land Condemnation		Liability		Employment	□ 650	Airline Regs	□ 864 SSID T		I
□ 895 Freedom of Info, Act □	220 Foreclosure		IMIGRATION	□ 446	American with	□ 660	•	□ 865 RSI (40	2009000000000	atasamo
	230 Rent Lease & Ejectment	□ 462	Naturalization Application		Disabilities - Other	□ £00	Safety /Health	FEDERAL I		
	240 Torts to Land 245 Tort Product Liability		Habcas Corpus-	□ 440	Other Civil	□ 690	Otner	□ 870 Taxes ( or Defe		IIIIIII
	290 All Other Real Property	□ 465	Alien Detainee Other Immigration Actions	777	Rights			□ 871 IRS-Th USC 76	rd Party	y 26
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY: Ca	ase Number: SACV1	12-00	0337 CJC	(JPR	(x)	<u> </u>				

UNDER SEAL

AFTER COMPLETING THE FRONT SIDE OF FORM CV-71, COMPLETE THE INFORMATION REQUESTED BELOW.

# UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT, CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA CIVIL COVER SHEET

	s this action been pro	eviously filed in this court a	nd dismissed, remanded or closed? ♥No □ Yes				
	e any cases been pre	viously filed in this court the	at are related to the present case? ☑No ☐ Yes				
□ C.	Arise from the same Call for determination For other reasons w	e or closely related transaction on of the same or substantial ould entail substantial duplic	ons, happenings, or events; or lly related or similar questions of law and fact; or cation of labor if heard by different judges; or , <u>and</u> one of the factors identified above in a, b or c also is present.				
IX. VENUE: (When completing the	following informat	ion, use an additional sheet i	f necessary.)				
			if other than California; or Foreign Country, in which EACH named plaintiff resides.  this box is checked, go to item (b).				
County in this District:*			California County outside of this District; State, if other than California; or Foreign Country				
Los Angeles							
			if other than California; or Foreign Country, in which EACH named defendant resides. If this box is checked, go to item (c).				
County in this District:*			California County outside of this District; State, if other than California; or Foreign Country				
All corporate defendants are located in Orange County. Defendant S. Lakhany resides in San Bernardino County.							
(c) List the County in this District; (Note: In land condemnation ca	•	•	if other than California; or Foreign Country, in which <b>EACH</b> claim arose.  wed.				
County in this District:*			California County outside of this District; State, if other than California; or Foreign Country				
Orange			Nationwide				
* Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernar Note: In land condemnation cases, us			San Luís Obispo Counties				
X. SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY (	OR PRO PER):	Wat Xe	ee Date March 5, 2012				
or other papers as required by law	. This form, approv	ed by the Judicial Conference	mation contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings e of the United States in September 1974, is required pursuant to Local Rule 3-1 is not filed ing the civil docket sheet. (For more detailed instructions, see separate instructions sheet.)				
Key to Statistical codes relating to So-	cial Security Cases:						
Nature of Suit Code	Abbreviation	Substantive Statement of	Cause of Action				
861	HIA	All claims for health insurance benefits (Medicare) under Title 18, Part A, of the Social Security Act, as amended. Also, include claims by hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, etc., for certification as providers of services under the program. (42 U.S.C. 1935FF(b))					
862	BL	All claims for "Black Lung" benefits under Title 4, Part B, of the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969. (30 U.S.C. 923)					
863	DIWC	All claims filed by insured workers for disability insurance benefits under Title 2 of the Social Security Act, as amended; plus all claims filed for child's insurance benefits based on disability. (42 U.S.C. 405(g))					
863	DIWW	All claims filed for widows or widowers insurance benefits based on disability under Title 2 of the Social Security Act, as amended. (42 U.S.C. 405(g))					
864	SSID	All claims for supplementa Act, as amended.	al security income payments based upon disability filed under Title 16 of the Social Security				
865	RSI	All claims for retirement (old age) and survivors benefits under Title 2 of the Social Security Act, as amended. (42 U.S.C. (g))					

CV-71 (05/08) CIVIL COVER SHEET Page 2 of 2

Case 8:12-cv-00337-CJC-JPR [	Ocument 1	Filed 03/05/12	Page 44 of 46	Page ID #:81	
Name & Address: Mark Glassman Federal Trade Commission 600 Dennsylvania Avenue, N.W., NJ-31 Washington, DC 20580	58	**			
		DISTRICT COU T OF CALIFOR			
Federal Trade Commission		CASE NUMBER			
v.	PLAINTIFF(S)	S	ACV12-00337 (	CJC (JPRx)	
Sameer Lakhany, et al. (See Attached)	DEFENDANT(S).	SUMMONS			
Within 21 days after service must serve on the plaintiff an answer to to counterclaim □ cross-claim or a motion or motion must be served on the plaintiff FTC, 600 Penn. Ave., NW, NJ-3158, Waijudgment by default will be entered again your answer or motion with the court.	of this summor he attached \( \frac{12}{2} \) on under Rule 1? s attorney, \( \frac{Ma}{2} \) ashington, \( \frac{DC}{2} \)	omplaint □ 2 of the Federal R ork Glassman 20580	amendules of Civil Proce	ed complaint edure. The answer _, whose address is If you fail to do so,	
MAR = 5 2012  Dated:		Бу	OLLS ROYCE P Deputy Clerk Seal of the Court)	ASCHALL 1146	
[Use 60 days if the defendant is the United States 60 days by Rule 12(a)(3)].	or a United States	agency, or is an offic	cer or employee of the	United States. Allowed	
CV-01A (10/11	SUMM	IONS			

#### **ATTACHMENT**

# Sameer Lakhany,

an individual;

#### The Credit Shop, LLC,

a limited liability company;

#### Fidelity Legal Services LLC,

a limited liability company;

# Titanium Realty, Inc.;

a corporation,

# Precision Law Center, Inc.,

a corporation; and

#### Precision Law Center LLC,

a limited liability company

# UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

# NOTICE OF ASSIGNMENT TO UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE FOR DISCOVERY

This case has been assigned to District Judge Cormac J. Carney and the assigned discovery Magistrate Judge is Jean P. Rosenbluth.

The case number on all documents filed with the Court should read as follows:

SACV12- 337 CJC (JPRx)

Pursuant to General Order 05-07 of the United States District Court for the Central District of California, the Magistrate Judge has been designated to hear discovery related motions.

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A	all discovery related motions	shou	ld be noticed	on the calenda	r of th	e Magistrate Judge	
				,			
=	=======================================	===		====== D COUNSEL	===		<i>:</i> :
	py of this notice must be served w a copy of this notice must be serv			complaint on all d	efendar	nts (if a removal action is	
Sub	sequent documents must be filed a	at the	following locatio	n:			
	Western Division 312 N. Spring St., Rm. G-8 Los Angeles, CA 90012	[X]	Southern Divis 411 West Four Santa Ana, CA	th St., Rm. 1-053	L	Eastern Division 3470 Twelfth St., Rm. 134 Riverside, CA 92501	
Failu	re to file at the proper location will resu	llt in yo	ur documents bei	ng returned to you.			