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STATE OF COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF LAW

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Consumer Protection Section Consumer Credit Unit

July 1, 2019

Honorable Pete Lee, Chairman (via email) Senate Judiciary Committee 200 E. Colfax, Room 346 Denver, CO 80203.

Honorable Mike Weissman, Chairman (via email) House Judiciary Committee 200 E. Colfax, Room 307 Denver, CO 80203

RE: Bi-Annual Report on Colorado Fair Debt Collection Practices Act

Dear Senator Lee and Representative Weissman:

In accordance with SB 17-216, which amended § 5-16-117(5) of the Colorado Fair Debt Collection Practices Act ("CFDCPA"), I am pleased to submit the Administrator's third bi-annual report accounting for the efficient discharge of all responsibilities assigned by law and the general administration of the collection agency licensing program within the Colorado Department of Law.

For the most part, this bi-annual report covers the period of December 31, 2018 through July 1, 2019. This report will follow the order set out in § 5-16-117(5).

Enforcement Actions

1. Lawsuits

a. Colorado v. Hopp, Colorado Court of Appeals Case No. 2016CA1983. This is was enforcement action against foreclosure law firm The Hopp Law Firm, LLC and related individuals and entities. The action asserts claims under the CFDCPA and other Colorado laws, including that the defendants violated C.R.S. §§ 5-16-107(1)(b)(I) and 5-16-108(1)(a) of the CFDCPA when pursuing foreclosure actions against Colorado homeowners. The trial court entered a judgment in favor of

the Administrator on the CFDCPA claims and the Colorado Court of Appeals (2018COA69M) affirmed the judgment on May 17, 2018 (opinion modified and rehearing denied on November 1, 2018). The Court of Appeals Opinion addresses the statute of limitations applicable to the CFDCPA and the award of penalties under the CFDCPA. Hopp filed a Petition for a Writ of Certiorari on December 28, 2018, challenging, among other things, the statute of limitations under the CFDCPA. The Colorado Supreme Court denied the Petition for Writ of Certiorari on June 3, 2019.

b. Colorado v. Castle Law Group, et al., Colorado Court of Appeals Case No. 2017CA923. This is an enforcement action against foreclosure law firm The Castle Law Group, LLC and related individuals and entities. The action, asserted by both the Administrator and the Colorado Attorney General, asserts claims under the CFDCPA and other Colorado laws. The CFDCPA claims allege that the defendants violated C.R.S. §§ 5-16-107(1)(b)(I) and 5-16-108(1)(a) when pursuing foreclosure actions against Colorado homeowners. After a three-week trial, the trial court entered an order in 2017 dismissing the Administrator's CFDCPA claims, in addition to rulings on other claims in the case. The plaintiffs and defendants both appealed. The Colorado Court of Appeals issued a ruling on April 4, 2019 that did not directly address the Administrator's CFDCPA claims. The plaintiffs filed a Petition for Writ of Certiorari on June 20, 2019.

2. Administrative Enforcement

- a. Stipulations & Final Agency Orders, Assurance of Discontinuance¹
 - i. Law Office of Wyn Taylor—\$36,348 (violations related to collection of returned checks)
 - ii. Revive Debt Collection Corp.—\$20,000 (surety company accepted demand on bond after agency failed to remit payment)
 - iii. Waypoint Resources—\$5,000 (credit reporting prior to sending a collection letter to consumers);
 - iv. Wakefield and Associates—\$2,000 (collecting while account was under dispute, and collecting an amount not due);
 - v. Plaza Services—\$3,000 (failing to disclose legal actions taken against them by other jurisdictions);

b. License Denials

i. No licenses were denied during this period.

¹ None of these enforcement actions were appealed or otherwise challenged.

- c. License Revocations
 - i. No licenses were revoked during this period.

Complaints & Outcomes:

- 1. Since January 1, 2018, the Consumer Credit Unit has received 304 complaints.
 - a. Of the 304 complaints filed, 202 are against licensed collection agencies, 50 are against unlicensed collection agencies, and 40 complaints are against attorneys.²

2. Outcomes

- a. 40 complaints have been resolved.
- b. 7 complaints against non-lawyer collection agencies have been referred to other agencies.
- c. 150 complaints resulted in No Action, either because of a lack of jurisdiction, no allegation of a violation of the CFDCPA, or similar deficiencies.
- d. 16 Cease & Desist notices have been issued to unlicensed agencies.
- e. The remaining complaints are still open and under investigation.

Other Actions:

1. 7 Advisory Letters and 3 (disciplinary) Letters of Admonition were issued.

Statutory Changes to Collection Agency Licensing Program

- 1. Debt Buyer Definition: The CFDCPA adds a new definition of "debt buyer." This section became effective on January 1, 2018.
- 2. Legal action requirements: The CFDCPA created new requirements for legal actions filed by debt collectors or collection agencies on debts owned by debt buyers. This section became effective on January 1, 2018.
- 3. Administrator duties: The Administrator has additional duties, which include reporting requirements, attending meetings of industry groups and advocacy organization, and hosting meetings each year for consumer advocacy organizations and industry groups. The Administrator's duties became effective on January 1, 2018.
- 4. Fees, costs, and costs of collection limitation: The CFDCPA adds a limitation to fees, costs, and costs of collection for debt due to the state or any political subdivision of the state collected on by a private collection agency or

² All complaints against attorneys were referred to the Office of Attorney Regulation Counsel.

privately retained attorney, except that the limitation does not apply is the state or political subdivision of the state has sold the debt to a third party. This section becomes effective July 1, 2019.

Significant Legal Filings—Amicus Brief

1. None.

Summary of New Regulations

1. None.

Legal Developments

1. None.

Matters to be Addressed at the Request of the Regulated Community or the Public

While there have been no formal requests from the public to the Administrator to address specific issues under the CFDCPA, licensees and other interested parties at prior public meetings raised the following issues:

- 1. Collection agencies that intentionally sue people that are covered by Medicaid;
- 2. Licensing of process servers;
- 3. Converting to licensing through the national multistate licensing system (NMLS);
- 4. Electronic communications with consumers/debtors;
- 5. Streamlining the application process, including upon the sale or transfer of a business;
- 6. Telephone verification of payment;
- 7. Define/clarify what the "meaningful involvement" of an attorney requires, especially in high volume businesses;
- 8. The complaint process, including streamlining, guidelines on an information resolution process, and making complaints public;
- 9. Enhanced communications with the Administrator, including the public meeting process;
- 10. Updating opinion letters; and
- 11. Consumer education and outreach.

Meetings

- 1. Correction to December 31, 2018 Bi-Annual Report. In his December 31, 2018 bi-annual report, the Interim Administrator stated the prior Administrator had been invited to a national conference of collection agencies or collection agency trade association. In the January 25, 2019 public meeting, the Interim Administrator was informed that the prior Administrator was invited to a local conference.
- 2. Meeting of relevant licensees, industry groups and associations, and other interested persons. The Administrator convened this meeting, as required by § 5-2-117(7), on July 30, 2018. The 30-day notice was provided directly (via email) to a list of licensees, industry groups and associations, and other interested parties compiled by the Administrator.
- 3. Meeting of licensees, consumer advocacy groups and associations, and other interested parties. The Administrator convened this meeting, as required by § 5-2-117(7), on January 25, 2019. The 30-day notice (via email) was provided to all consumer advocacy groups and associations and other interested parties compiled by the Administrator. See Attachment 1 (Transcript).
- 4. Meeting of relevant licensees, industry groups and associations, and other interested persons. This meeting is scheduled for July 29, 2019, at 10:00 AM at the Ralph L. Carr Colorado Judicial Center, 1300 Broadway, Denver CO 80203. The direct 30-day notice (via email) was provided to licensees, industry groups and associations, and other interested parties compiled by the Administrator.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like further information.

Respectfully submitted,

FOR THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

MARTHA FULFORD

Administrator, CFDCPA Martha.Fulford@coag.gov

720-508-6020

Cc: Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee (via email)
Members of House Judiciary Committee (via email)

> Kurt Morrison, Colorado Department of Law. Deputy Attorney General for Intergovernmental Affairs (via email)

Attachment

ATTACHMENT 1 Transcript of January 25, 2019, Public Hearing

PROCEEDINGS

MR. ZAVISLAN: So good morning, everybody. I'll start off with: My name is Jan Zavislan. I am still the acting or interim administrator of the Uniform Consumer Credit Code, which includes enforcement of Colorado's Fair Debt Collection Practices Act. I didn't think I would still be here by the time this meeting rolled around. We've been trying since May to fill the position formerly held by Julie Meade without success so far.

I've had a recent conversation with our new attorney general, Phil Weiser, and he is telling me that they're going to be moving forward on a full-time administrator replacement in the coming hopefully weeks, not coming months.

This is a public hearing pursuant to Section 5-16-117, Subsection 7 of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act.

And if you recall in 2017 when the General Assembly, in House Bill 216, repealed the collection agency board, it placed on the administrator several additional responsibilities. One was to file biannual reports with the Joint Judiciary Committees in the Colorado legislature, the oversight committees to the Department of Law; and two, was to hold a meeting

public hearing. We sent out notice to everybody on our interested parties list, which we expanded this time around to include I think at least all of the email addresses we had for the Colorado Bar Association's

Consumer Protection Committee, because we had noticed
 that so much of the work of that committee has been on
 debt collection issues. That notice went out I believe

December 18th or 19th, more than 30 days in advance of this meeting as required by Colorado Open Meetings Law.

This is completely informal, right. I am, while an attorney and while the acting administrator, it is not my role today to provide legal opinions or legal advice; to provide interpretations of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, or any of the rules that the administrator has adopted under that Act. So, you know, we can have a discussion about issues involving the Act or the rules, but nothing that I say today should be construed as an informal or formal position statement or opinion of the administrator or of the attorney general's office.

It's going to be mostly a listening session. I'm here, in my capacity as acting administrator, to hear from you. I want to hear about issues that you're seeing, problems that you're facing. I am most interested in -- everybody here is well aware

every January for the two years of the bill with consumer advocacy groups and associations and other interested parties; and to hold every July a similar meeting, but with collection agencies, attorneys representing creditors or collection agencies, and other interested persons.

Julie Meade hosted the first of these meetings last January. I hosted the meeting with the collection agency representatives and attorneys last July. The transcripts I think of both of those meetings are available on the attorney general's website, COAG.gov. And if you go to the licensing section, you should see links both to the written annual reports that we filed as well, and those annual reports contain or have as attachments the transcripts of the first two public hearings that we held.

So a couple of just basic housekeeping things. The restrooms are literally out this door and a little bit to your right if anybody needs to do it. You know where the Starbucks is probably. If you go back towards reception and down that hallway, there's a small cafeteria, coffee, et cetera, if you need something to drink during this meeting.

The way I want to conduct these and the way I conducted the meeting in July is truly as a

of the fact that now it has been a number of years since any formal rulemaking was undertaken under the Fair Debt Collection Practice Act. And we are aware, from meetings last January and July and from our own review, that there certainly are areas where the Act and the rules need updating; where there may be some

new issues that aren't currently addressed in rule that ought to be addressed.

And I'll be honest with you, if I had known that eight and a half months would go by and I'd still be the acting administrator, I think we would have tried to do maybe some rulemaking this fall, but I really think that that should be the prerogative of the new attorney general and a permanent administrator.

So we will be looking to making some formal rulemaking announcements sometime this calendar year, and we'll obviously invite members of the industry, members of the consumer advocacy and other interested parties to participate in that process as well.

So the ground rules are going to be this:

We have about 90 minutes. We may not take all of that time, we'll take it all if we need it.

I would like to have everybody who is in the room, if you haven't done it, on your way out,

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please, we have a sign-up sheet so that we have a formal record of everybody that was in attendance. And I would ask that you all do that.

If you want to make a public statement -unfortunately this room isn't miked for a handheld wireless. So that the court reporter, who's going to take a transcript of this, can hear you, if you would please come forward to near the front of the room, please state your name and spell your name for her, and then try to speak up as loud as you can so that everybody can hear. Now, I'm also happy to simply relinquish the podium and have you come here if you'd rather to make whatever comments or public statements that you'd like to make, so we'll need your name and the spelling of your name. And then try to hold your comments, please, to about five minutes, okay? It looks like we have about 65 people, I think. The room is set up for 70, almost 80. So give an opportunity for everybody to make a public statement. We certainly will -- I can follow up with you, we can have follow-up questions, we can have follow-up dialogue.

But as I said, my goal is to have as open, as public a hearing as we possibly can, and that includes any members of the collection industry or their attorneys who want to make a statement today are

MR. ZAVISLAN: So what are we hearing?
What's going on out there from those who are
representing debtors or who represent consumer advocacy
or other groups that you would like to have a
conversation about today? This is way too quiet a
crowd. Everything's perfect.

Yes, ma'am.

MS. EVANS: I might need the mike because my voice doesn't carry. I am not an attorney. My name is Eileen Evans, E-I-L-E-E-N E-V-A-N-S. I'm representing myself against Collection Center in an active case, so I'm researching case studies at the library.

I have two questions, and they relate to helping debtors like myself address abuses by collection agencies.

How do you research an instance where a wage was garnished without an agreement on file? So I don't know if it's all in the Fair Debt Collection Agency Act (sic) or other laws, but that's one case that happened to me. And I had a falsified stipulation agreement filed with the Court, so in essence, how do you look up issues like that in a database or maybe the consumer protection committee with the Bar Association? So I was wondering, is there a group of people that

more than welcome to do so as well. My view is public means public.

So with that, let's get started. And is anybody willing to step up and be the first to address the group? Tom, why am I not surprised?

MR. ROMOLA: What a surprise, huh? What a surprise. Tom Romola, R-O-M-O-L-A. I'm the legislative chairman for the Associated Collection Agencies.

On page 5 of your report to the legislature, one more error that you tried to fix at the last meeting that we need to correct again. On line 1, No. 1, Julie was invited to a local conference, not the national --

MR. ZAVISLAN: Okay. I misunderstood you then. I tried to make that correction because of our conversation at the last time, so ...

MR. ROMOLA: And it's nitpicky, but it might come into play down the road, so ...

MR. ZAVISLAN: Okay. Perfect.

MR. ROMOLA: That's all I have for right

now.

MR. ZAVISLAN: Thank you. And by the way, the Romola rule is you get to talk once.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I second.

have filed these cases? I'm open to any ideas. Thank you.

It seems to be in favor of the collection agencies, and very difficult for the claimant to make their case, that's my point.

MR. ZAVISLAN: So unfortunately I can't give you legal advice. I can tell you a couple of resources that you might consider. One is the Colorado Law Library, which is in this building. If you go past the elevator banks and keep walking to the other atrium, the courthouse side, is the Colorado state law library. And they have a staff of librarians who are there to assist on all variety of legal research or legal-type questions. So that's one.

And I always mention the Colorado Legal Services Corporation. That's somewhat income based, so I don't know what your situation is. But they have a staff of attorneys throughout the state of Colorado that work on legal issues for their clients, including on debt collection matters. So those are the two resources that come to mind.

Anybody have any other ideas where we might send Eileen? Yes, ma'am.

MS. TAYLOR-HUNT: Hi, Eileen. My name is T.A. Taylor-Hunt. I'm the state chair for the National

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Association of Consumer Advocates. If you want to connect with me when this is over, we can point you to some potential resources.

MS. EVANS: Okay.

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MR. ZAVISLAN: Thank you, T.A. Yes. MS. STURGES: I'm with the State Court Administrator's office. Judicial has self-help centers. And there are folks in the self-help centers located in the courthouses called Sherlocks. And they can assist -- they can't give legal advice; however,

they can help you identify potential forms that might be relevant to your situation. And you can take advantage of that.

And if you want to look at the state court judicial website in your particular district where your case is pending, there should be information there.

MR. ZAVISLAN: Could I have you state your name?

MS. STURGES: Sure. It's Sharon Sturges. I'm actually the director of the Office of Dispute Resolution, not in the trial courts; but certainly we -- we offer mediation services as well. So if you want to come up to me at any point in the meeting, we can step outside and I can direct you to how to get a

with an astounding amount of information that's been submitted by the various collection agencies that

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3 utilize NMLS for various other states; Idaho, 4 Massachusetts, Indiana are just a few.

> But it also allows, for those of us who have to have licenses all across the nation that use NMLS, to get on once a year, and the licenses all expire December 31st, and it tightens up the windows and allows me, for instance, to get 84 licenses in a period of two months, and that includes branches and main state licenses as well.

But what it also does, it allows to not talk to staff with Massachusetts, Indiana, Idaho, it allows them to refocus. And if their goal is to help consumers, it removes the function and gives you more time to focus in on the consumers as opposed to having to go through what can be some fairly redundant functions involved in getting an entity licensed or renewed.

One other issue I'd like to bring up is, we don't have a lot of complaints filed against us. One reason we do -- and I'm sure everyone in here prefers not to have complaints filed and have to respond -- is we have implemented a program that if a debtor calls and if they're heated or if they're hot,

1 referral to mediation as well. 2

MR. ZAVISLAN: So, Sharon, it's Sturges? MS. STURGES: Sturges, yes. I will sign

4 in.

> MR. ZAVISLAN: Okay. Sturges? MS. STURGES: Just one S at the end. MR. ZAVISLAN: One S. Thank you. So,

Eileen, I hope that's helpful.

MS. EVANS: Thank you.

MR. ZAVISLAN: Next? Who else has an issue they'd like to talk about, an issue they'd like to identify; thoughts or ideas about where the rules are inadequate and need to be updated, need to be amended or changed? Come on up.

MR. DEEDS: My name is Michael Deeds, D-E-E-D-S. I'm a partner with Linebarger Goggan Blair & Sampson. I was here in July, and I had requested that the Department of Law consider transitioning over to the National Multistate Licensing Service (sic). And I'm here to re-urge that request.

Many of the functions that your office performs can be done in this as, if not a more swift and efficient fashion through NMLS. It doesn't detract or diminish the critical nature of your office; but what it does, number one, it provides you, as a group,

and it's not just because they owe a debt and they want

2 to deny it, they're immediately routed to our 3 collection department manager, of which we have 12

nationwide, and we try to resolve it so that we don't

have to go through the process, for instance, of coming

here, filing a formal response.

But there are interim steps -- and I was hoping perhaps that Colorado might consider issuing something that gives a collection agency some guidelines by which you might accept some informal resolution process. And it doesn't have to be anything that is mandatory, but it would be helpful to know what some of the regulatory agencies perceive to be, where are you getting your highest rate of complaints?

We see a lot of addresses that are incorrect or phone numbers that we dial and they're incorrect. We have very few where it's abuse of collection techniques. I think that's few and far between in the industry these days. We're very sensitive to what you guys are trying to do. Thank you very much.

MR. ZAVISLAN: Thank you, Mike. So I can tell you, after the July meeting I had staff start looking at NMLS. I had a staff member actually attend a national conference in which

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there was a presentation on NMLS, so it is something
that we're aware of. It would require, my
understanding, is legislative change. And so with a
brand-new set of people upstairs, the attorney general
and his legislative director, et cetera, it wasn't
possible to do anything this year. We haven't decided

whether we want to go that route or not even, but we are definitely looking at it and following up.

Anybody else? Yes, T.A.

MS. TAYLOR-HUNT: Maybe the meeting before last we were talking about some problems consumers were encountering with process servers.

MR. ZAVISLAN: Yes.

MS. TAYLOR-HUNT: And we were raising the issue of whether any thought has been given to trying to license process servers.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We can't hear her. MR. ZAVISLAN: I'll repeat the question. The question was: At the meeting a year ago there was a discussion about process servers and problems with process service. And T.A.'s question was whether or not there's any thought given to licensing of process servers, right? Do I have that correct? So the quick answer is, as far as I know -- I thought that there was a sunrise application several years ago.

You know, if enough -- if there's enough of an interest and there's enough of a need, that would be the process that we'd do. It wouldn't be something that our office, or that me, as the interim administrator, would be able to do. And we can't do it by rule, obviously. Yeah, Tom.

 $\ensuremath{\mathsf{MR}}.$ ROMOLA: Jan, can you hear me alright if I don't come up?

MR. ZAVISLAN: I can hear you, yes.
MR. ROMOLA: The legislature introduced a
bill similar to that, I believe it was three years ago,
two years ago maybe. They were wise enough to
determine that that was going to jack up the prices of
process servers, which would harm consumers, so they
voted it down in first committee, if I recall.

MR. ZAVISLAN: All right. What I was thinking was remembering from two or three years ago was exactly that. I knew that there was some movement or push towards that.

Now, we've had conversations with some debt collectors and law firms doing debt collection about complaints that we receive about process service. So it's something that we are aware of, it's something that we have worked with other collection agencies and worked with law firms doing collections work on making

Now, for those of you who don't know, state law requires, in most instances where there is a proposal to license or otherwise regulate a previously unlicensed, unregulated profession, that they initiate what's called a sunrise application with the Department of Regulatory Agencies. And they do an analysis and they take a look at risk versus benefits, cost versus benefits as to whether or not a bill should be introduced in the legislature to, in this instance, say, license process servers.

I thought that there had been -- and maybe it's farther back than two or three years ago, but I do recall seeing a sunrise report that DORA recommended that they not be licensed; that they hadn't been shown or there wasn't enough of a need. But that's certainly one process.

And if you're interested in that, I would encourage that you communicate with your local state representative or state senator, although that's not required. Citizens and other groups are fully entitled to make an application with DORA for a sunrise review and report. And if you just go to their website, and I can't remember what -- it's in their policy -- I don't remember exactly what it's called, there's information on how you make an application for a sunrise review.

sure that they're reporting to us when they have a belief that a process server that they have been using isn't adequately affecting service.

Other questions or comments? Yes. MR. VEDRA: Hi. My name is Dan Vedra. I'm an attorney in private practice. And I represent individuals like Ms. Evans, who are typically the defendants in collection lawsuits.

And I have two questions and sort of two comments and requests. One would be, what, if any, outreach does the administrator and the regulators do with consumer advocacy groups that deal with representing individuals like Ms. Evans?

Two would be, what precisely is on the rulemaking agenda, if there is any agenda? And is there the possibility that the administrator would set a deadline for a request for rulemaking so that rather than sharing ideas for rulemaking in sort of an open forum where we're sharing sort of anecdotal information, and we can gather up information that we feel is important and necessary and should be considered in making a rule and making a formal rulemaking request?

My first ask would be, in terms of complaints that are received by the administrator, one

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thing I think has been tremendously successful with the CFPV is that there is an available database online where you can look up all manner of complaints that are made to the CFPV. It's something that's very efficient, it's very robust, and it helps you to identify issues that are coming up frequently as against particular bad actors.

And so as an advocate for consumers, it's helpful for me to be able to look at the issue I'm dealing with and determine whether this is a one-off problem that may be the result of a mistake, or whether this a systematic problem that comes up over and over again. And I think everybody has been very happy with that database that has had access to it because it provides so much information.

The last -- and I think that there's probably a lot of common ground in this room about this, is as a consumer lawyer, we encounter a lot of just straight-up scams. There's so much information out there that people can get and use in a bad way. And the thing that I see most frequently is information taken in bulk from bankruptcy files. And they'll take bulk information from bankruptcy files, find people that had old Payday loans, for example, and use the information from the bankruptcy file to use that to

for whatever reason. I think it's partly because of
its heavy regulatory versus enforcement roles. But I'd
certainly support doing a great deal more, and will
have conversations with the new attorney general and
whomever he appoints as a permanent administrator, to
do exactly that. Not only just to consumer advocacy
groups, but I think in industry as well. And I know
Tom would love to have us at every one of their

In regard to rulemaking, I mean, while we're accumulating a lot of different ideas primarily out of last January and this July's meetings, we don't have a formal rulemaking agenda set.

meetings locally to do that exact kind of outreach.

What I would propose to the new attorney general and to the new administrator is that in advance of formal rulemaking under the Administrative Procedure Act, that we actually issue a request essentially for proposals or requests for information to allow both the industry and other interested parties, whether they be lawyers or consumer advocacy groups, to suggest areas in which they think that we ought to at least consider adopting a rule. That would help us then in establishing a formal rulemaking agenda, which would then go out as part of a notice of proposed rulemaking and a public hearing on those rules, rather than get

call and harass people and convince them to try to pay something that they don't actually pay (sic). This isn't good for anyone except for the scam artist. And most of these people are out of state and probably part of criminal organizations.

It makes collection agencies' work more difficult because these things exist. It makes my work more difficult because there's nothing I can do to stop somebody who's a criminal actor and is doing this to a lot of people. And suing them for a thousand bucks in federal court or state court under the FDPCA isn't really of tremendous value if there's no possibility of collection; and in reality, that person should just be in jail somewhere. So those would be my two questions and two asks.

MR. ZAVISLAN: Thanks, Dan. So a couple of things. What I've been proposing -- so I've spent 30 years in consumer protection in this office. And I've noticed that while we do a tremendous amount of education and outreach on the consumer fraud side, we have a stopfraudcolorado.gov website, we speak all around the state and partner with other groups and organizations who do that.

I think historically there has not been nearly enough education and outreach out of the UCCC

all the way to a rulemaking hearing and then start hearing all these ideas that we haven't really had an opportunity to digest and submit -- and get out to all of you for public comment. So that's certainly how I plan to proceed with our new attorney general and with the new administrator, whenever she or he is appointed.

You know, the complaint database is an interesting one. We've taken the position, as an office, for all 30 years that I've been here, is that we guard pretty carefully consumer complaint and consumer complaint information. The idea that -- we've actually been sued by the news media for refusing to turn over consumer complaints; unsuccessfully.

There is some value, though, I think in -- so I've spent a fair amount of time in the C of PV (phonetic) database as well, and it's all deidentifying, right? You can't tell -- I think they even -- I don't even think they include full zip codes in that database. And so I understand that there is value to that. It would be really more of a cost issue for us.

We're in the process right now of redoing our entire database, both licensing and complaints, because we're dealing with pretty antiquated technologies. I certainly think that there may be some

6 (Pages 18 to 21)

value, as we work through that new database process, of having some public-facing information either in an aggregated, but certainly in a deidentified way to accomplish some of that. So I will make sure to raise that to the powers here as well.

You know, Dan, we're seeing the exact same kind of scams, phantom debt, collection of illegal debt. We usually proceed this way: When we get a complaint, sometimes all we have is a phone number. It's either a capture on a caller ID, which, as most of you know, can be spoofed very easily. To the extent that they're legitimate phone numbers, we send subpoenas out to sometimes three or four or five phone companies, because there's a lot of reselling, especially of long distance phone numbers, to see if we can identify an actual address at the -- that attaches to that phone number. And in most cases there is no actual address. It turns out to be a PO box, it turns out to be a vacant lot, or it turns out to be a completely unassigned phone number.

Where we do find an address and the address is continental United States, we will send cease and desist letters out. I have to be honest with you, most of them come back not accepted, undelivered. Even if we send them certified mail, we get them back

Mr. Baker (phonetic) is aware, I'm sure, that making these complaint databases public is problematic despite the absence of a federal parallel to our beloved C.R.S. 5-16-128, which would criminalize violations of the Colorado Fair Debt Collections Act.

To my amazement, none of my clients has ever instructed me to seek a waiver of criminal prosecution in exchange for a full cooperative response to an inquiry from the administrator. I'm not sure that that attitude won't change when this database becomes available to the public.

MR. ZAVISLAN: Thank you. Any other comments? Anybody else have an issue they'd like to address or at least make public at today's meeting? Yes, T.A.?

MS. TAYLOR-HUNT: One of the areas that we're finding more difficulty with is ambulance overbilling or really rapid debt collection. So far there's only been a few debt collectors who are being overly aggressive with medical debt, but there are supposed to be more stop points before you go to that level. And I'm just wondering if you all are hearing more medical debt complaints, particularly as it relates to ambulance.

MR. ZAVISLAN: So I have to -- so that's

longo

as unaccepted or undelivered. So it's a challenge.

My office overall, we enforce the Colorado No-Call List Act, same exact issue there. Really, really difficult to find where these companies are. We know that for a while a lot of the phantom debt collection phone calls were emanating out of India. We know they also come out of Eastern European and South American or Central American countries as well. So it's a huge challenge for a pretty small staff given all of the responsibilities that we have to try to track these guys down. It's an area where at least on -- I think we've even done consumer education, consumer alerts about phantom debt.

We had one where they were actually spoofing the attorney general as the caller; we did an advisory about that. So, you know, it's another area that I would put down in the category of, we can do a much better job of getting information and education out even if we're not able to identify and enforce against some of these companies. So, thank you. Other comments. BBB? No, go ahead.

MR. GREENBERG: I'm Alan Greenberg, Greenberg & Sada; president of the Colorado Creditors Bar Association, and I serve on ACA's legislative council. T.A. Taylor (sic). We have not gotten a huge number of complaints about this.

We see complaints regarding medical debts where it's either Medicaid debt that is being collected on inappropriately; so you know that if you're a healthcare provider, your contract with the state Health Care Policy & Financing says, You have to accept our reimbursement to you as a hundred percent of the payment of that client's medical expenses, and you can't balance bill that client or set out for collection.

Now, for the collection industry, I'm not sure how you would know to begin with whether or not a debtor is a -- the debt you're dealing with is Medicaid medical debt.

And we've actually had a conversation with legal counsel over at Health Care Policy & Finance about that. And we typically don't look necessarily at the debt collectors unless we can make some sort of informal arrangement or informal resolution. We've been trying to refer some of these back to Health Care Policy & Finance because they have enforcement authority against providers that are improperly balance billing on medicaid debt. We struggle with it internally about how best to handle that.

7 (Pages 22 to 25)

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We have issues that we see on medical debt in a -- in an estranged family relationship, divorce, separation, where a child incurs medical debt, and one parent or the other is contacted by a collection agency, and they say, I never authorized services on behalf of this child; she's got full custody, he's got full custody, whatever it may be. I think Colorado law is against them in that situation, it makes both parents responsible for those debts.

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But again, these issues just come up as they come up, and we try to figure out the best way to try to deal with them. And maybe not successfully in every instance, but I'll tell you, we're not seeing that huge -- this issue came up this summer, when we met with the collection agency groups, about waiting until the insurance claims are fully adjusted and paid before debt is subsequently sent out for collection. And that's something that I think we can look at both legislatively and potentially through rulemaking to see about that.

to time about somebody who's being contacted by a debt collection company or an individual or a lawyer, and they're still in negotiations with their medical

Because we do have complaints from time

24 25 healthcare provider -- or insurance company about why because the repeal is in statute. Now, if they want to extend it, then they would probably do a review and a

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2 3 recommendation and a -- it's not really a term, but a

mini sunset. I mean, nobody from -- and believe me,

5 DORA policy reaches out to me all the time on a whole

6 variety of issues as they're building these reports, 7 and nobody's reached out to us, that I know of, on this

8 yet. And it would be about now that they would be

9 doing it, right, because it would have to be in the 10 October 2019 sunset report for the 2020 legislature.

MR. ROMOLA: You don't think they'll issue a report to --

MR. ZAVISLAN: I don't know. I just don't know the answer. All I know is they have not reached out to us about it, and they almost always do.

MR. ROMOLA: Second question, if you don't mind, I'll put you on the spot. How do you think this format's working yourself? And I know you're -again, you were put in a tough spot, and I appreciate that, but how do you think it's working?

MR. ZAVISLAN: So I have to tell you, my personal opinion only, and not that of the attorney general, is that I'm not sure that having two meetings makes a lot of sense, two separate groups; which is why in July and this time around I expanded the

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did you not cover this, why did you not cover that, et cetera, et cetera.

So I think there's something to be looked at there that would achieve a nice, fair balance between creditors, debt collectors, but also between medical patients who are in negotiations with their insurance companies.

Other comments, questions, statements? Tom S.

MR. ROMOLA: I have a question if you're ready.

MR. ZAVISLAN: Sure.

MR. ROMOLA: First of all, I want to thank you for the way you're handling these meetings. You were put in a pretty tough position, and you're doing an excellent job. And I think everyone in this room probably appreciates it, so thank you. You can clap if you want.

As you know, the -- this portion of the sunset comes up again next year, a year from now. Is it your understanding that DORA will do a complete research again this summer to determine the validity of this format and how this continues; do you know?

MR. ZAVISLAN: You know, I don't think they will. I don't think it's scheduled that way

notification and the opportunity to speak. I think maybe -- I don't have a problem with twice a year, but the fact that we bifurcate it in the way that we have through legislation, I'm not sure it makes that much sense.

We had a good discussion in July with both sides of the aisle, right; we have good representation here and discussion here today with both sides. Unless you're telling me whether it's consumer advocates' lawyers or collection agencies' lawyers, that you somehow feel constrained about what you're willing to say. You know, those are just my thoughts,

You know, I don't think that this is a bad idea at all. I do think it connects the regulator more with her constituents, both the licensed and debtors and debtor counsel. So I don't have any problem with this process personally, I just wonder whether it makes sense to, if we're going to do this twice a year, why not bring everybody together for both meetings instead of having one that's supposed to be this and one that's supposed be that; but that would require legislation.

MR. ROMOLA: Yeah, but I believe in the July meeting you made it pretty clear that anyone could

8 (Pages 26 to 29)

30 32 1 1 talk. bill next legislative session to extend it. What I 2 2 MR. ZAVISLAN: Absolutely. don't know, Dan, is whether that necessarily implicates 3 3 MR. ROMOLA: I don't think there was DORA. I just don't know how that works. 4 any -- like, the first meeting that Julie did in MR. VEDRA: And as an administrator, is 5 5 January, that was not effective, but the one you did there any obligation for you to provide input on that? 6 was fine. 6 Because my opinion is that I think that these meetings 7 7 MR. ZAVISLAN: Yeah, I think that -are effective. I think that the format in having them 8 8 again, I've been around for so many years now, I just divided up into groups is not effective. I felt that 9 think public hearing means public. And whether you're 9 the first meeting that we had with Ms. Meade was -- you 10 10 in the industry or whether you're Eileen who has know, I didn't think it was fair that the other side 11 questions and issues and concerns and wants an 11 didn't have an opportunity to speak, and I appreciated 12 12 opportunity to address the administrator, I think they that that was welcome at the last meeting. And that 13 13 should have an opportunity to do that. makes sense because dialogue, I think, leads to 14 MR. ROMOLA: You're from way back, and I 14 results. And so, you know, to have more of an 15 know you're familiar with the old collection agency 15 opportunity to come together and discuss these issues 16 16 on more than just a semiannual basis I think would give board. 17 17 MR. ZAVISLAN: Yes. a little bit more heft behind the ideas and gain some momentum into things that would need to be done. 18 18 MR. ROMOLA: Do you think that was more 19 effective than these meetings, having a board that --19 preferred to be done. 20 20 And then I think that another way to 21 MR. ZAVISLAN: Yeah. Given what I saw, 21 improve this process, you know, I come here to listen 22 22 the lack of any substantial attendance at board as well as to speak. And I know I can probably be 23 meetings, I think this is better. 23 criticized for speaking too much, but it would be nice 24 24 to hear -- have more of an agenda about sort of the MR. ROMOLA: Appreciate it. Thank you. 25 25 MR. ZAVISLAN: Yes. Any questions? Yes, year to come, about topics that the administrator is 31 33 1 1 concerned with, that the administrator's seeing come up T.A. 2 2 in the regular affairs so that people that are MS. TAYLOR-HUNT: I want to second that 3 3 interested in those topics can then prepare in advance on the collection agency board. I was on that board 4 4 and say, Here's what you're concerned about, and here's for two terms, and I think the thing that was most 5 5 lacking was any feedback or input from the public. how we view the issue so that it's more -- so not only 6 6 MR. ZAVISLAN: Okay. Yeah, I think that all the constituents are involved, but also that 7 7 the administrator is setting an agenda for what you're that's -- certainly the times that I attended, there 8 8 seeing as well because you have a different was -- I mean, we didn't even necessarily have board 9 9 members always there, but certainly industry, and never perspective. 10 10 the public. There would be seven people in the entire MR. ZAVISLAN: Yeah, I think that's 11 11 room, and four of them worked for us, so ... really fair. I hadn't really thought about that. The 12 12 agendas are, as you've seen, very bare bones. It was Any other questions or comments before we 13 13 call this meeting to a halt? my understanding -- I was not involved in the 14 14 legislative process that led to the repeal of the board Yeah, Dan. 15 15 in the creation of these, so I don't have that MR. VEDRA: Yes, I had a question about 16 background. I basically looked back and saw what Julie 16 the sunset. So the provision of the act that calls for 17 17 had done for the January meeting that year. these meetings is set to sunset unless renewed? 18 MR. ZAVISLAN: Yes. 18 But there is some sense for that. And 19 MR. VEDRA: And so it's up to DORA then 19 certainly staff brings issues to me all the time that 20 20 to determine whether they believe it's effective or could very well be, you know, informally, as long as we 21 21 make it clear that this isn't to substitute for whether -- I'm sorry, I just am misunderstanding that. 22 22 MR. ZAVISLAN: No, you didn't rulemaking or any other kind of formal process, but do 23 23 exactly what you're suggesting might make a great deal misunderstand because I don't know formally whether it 24 24 even requires DORA at this point. I think it will of sense. 25 25

9 (Pages 30 to 33)

And if I'm still here, I will do that for

repeal by statute unless DORA or a legislator files a

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July. I will make sure that whomever replaces me as a permanent administrator has that idea in mind as well.

MS. MOODY: Good morning. Makyla Moody, M-A-K-Y-L-A, last name, M-O-O-D-Y. I'm an attorney here with Greenberg & Sada. I do a lot of creditor rights litigation and et cetera.

In the summer's meeting I had addressed about the advisory opinions that were released by the administrator, and that nothing has been updated on the administrator's website. I noticed in your report this time there was an indication the administrator had released a number of opinion letters, but those have not been added to the website. Is there any intention to do that?

MR. ZAVISLAN: So I'm not sure where you get the information. I issued a letter opinion (sic) in December that was on credit, on lending, but I don't think we have issued a formal letter opinion on any CFDCPA-related issues in my eight months here.

Certainly we've had a lot of correspondence, we've had informal correspondence, but I don't think anything that would be -- unless I've just missed it, Makyla, and I'm sorry if I have, but I'm not aware of it.

MS. MOODY: If I may, it says -- I guess

distinction. If it's an enforcement letter, I don't
 think that the person they give it to, who's being
 enforced, wants that published. But if it's a, Hey, we
 wonder if we're doing this wrong ...

MR. ZAVISLAN: Yeah, I'm going to follow up, Makyla and Dan, on that very specific thing because I'm not sure what exactly those are -- well, not so much what they are, what our history has been about updating those on our website. I don't think historically we had that right.

MS. MOODY: And to be clear, I'm not advocating that we publish the disciplinary actions, it was the advisory position.

MR. ZAVISLAN: Right. And I think that -- we may call them that, but I don't know that they are advisory in the sense of giving an interpretation of the statute, right, but we'll take a look at it definitely.

MR. SHOOP: My name is Mike Shoop, S-H-O-O-P. And I think what -- I think what you may be thinking of is, there used to be an advisory opinion issued on occasion by the administrator about a certain rule or about a certain piece of legislation, and those advisory opinions were public and sent to everybody. Advisory letters regarding disciplinary actions have

this is page 3. It says, Other actions by the administrator in your report, it says 10 advisory letters and 9 disciplinary letters were issued. If it's an advisory letter, that would be noteworthy to both consumers and the industry, as a whole --

MR. ZAVISLAN: Oh, I see.

MS. MOODY: -- as to understand what advice or opinions the administrator is taking, and we were wondering if that will be published on the website.

MR. ZAVISLAN: So we have not historically, I don't think -- I know that you can look and see who has had a disciplinary action. I don't know historically, have we ever placed LOAs or stipulated -- well, maybe stipulated finance orders on the website, itself, I don't know.

We'd have to go back, and that would be quite a heavy lift to go back, because as you can imagine, we do a fair number of these. The advisory letters there would have been staff advisories to an agency about a particular issue. But I will look into those and see what exactly those were. Those would not necessarily come to or come from me.

MR. VEDRA: Would those be more an enforcement-type letter or ... I mean, I can see the

never been public.

MR. ZAVISLAN: I mean, certainly anything that is an interpretation of an existing rule or statute is public, is on our website, and there's a link on the licensing page both on the lending side and on the debt collection side to those.

MR. GREENBERG: Briefly, Alan Greenberg again. On a similar vein, we think that those opinion letters that are available for the public's approval could stand a little updating.

MR. ZAVISLAN: Well, so, that Dunn Reedy (phonetic) one from 1989 that I thought was still as fresh as the day ... You know, it's a really -- we actually have had this conversation in the last two months as a very, very old Laura Hughes (phonetic) opinion letter has become relevant again, not -- I mean, the issue has become relevant again. And we had the very conversation that you just mentioned about whether or not we still think that that's the correct interpretation today.

So I think that is definitely something that a new administrator should definitely have on his or her agenda to go back, because some of them are really old. And you can tell they're really old because it looks like they were on a typewriter, not a

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computer. I kid you not at all. Okay. Thank you. I will definitely add that to an agenda as well.

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MR. VEDRA: There's one from about 2005 that's wrong.

MR. ZAVISLAN: Well, Daniel --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, but that was the 2000s, so ...

MR. ZAVISLAN: I can give you the three months where I was previously the acting administrator, and I can talk about the last eight months where I've been the acting administrator, and I can guarantee you, nothing wrong here.

Any last comments, questions, concerns? Yes, Eileen.

MS. EVANS: Hi. I'm a financial analyst. And just as a comparison with law and finance, the City of Boulder has its comprehensive annual financial report, which only accountants and finance people can understand; then they have a simplified version for people called the Pather (phonetic). And I'm wondering if you could take this law and put it in a simplified version for people to understand.

Because I still don't understand how a debt collector attaches itself to a debt and what's required at that first step. Because I had -- I had my

overseeing financial advisors.

you guys would hand out to ...

MR. ZAVISLAN: I think those have long gone the way of the dust. It's probably worth looking at that again and reviving something like that. I'm just trying to think of a way rather than our office saying, Well, here's what we think the FDCPA means --Dan.

MR. VEDRA: So I agree that that's information that's necessary. And I think that it would be helpful on all ends, because I imagine your staff received lots of phone calls, I assume the collection agencies received lots of phone calls, and I received lots of phone calls that say, Why do they want so much money from me, they bought this for pennies on the dollar?

And there's a multitude of different ways that debts are bought and sold and how ownership changes or how rights change. And you can't capture them all, but there's, like, three or four different ones that come up most of the time. And so having that information on the attorney general's website or on the Stop Fraud Colorado website that would be much better than people Googling it, finding these just bizarre briefs that end up getting filed in court cases that are 150 pages long; and they're talking about, you

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wage garnished before they had ever communicated anything with me. So I'm looking for the very basics of how this law works and where the abuses happen. The same thing happens with the SEC governing -- or

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So having a list of -- in plain English where the abuses are or where they might occur, what is required would be helpful for nonattorneys.

MR. ZAVISLAN: Go ahead, T.A. MS. TAYLOR-HUNT: We can help with that. MS. EVANS: Okay.

MR. ZAVISLAN: So let me just put out as a thought, again, probably not for me, but for whomever is permanent. And this would, I think, in total fairness, would be a collaborative type of effort between consumer advocacy groups, debt collections, and my office. If we were to put out that kind of a -- you know, the laymen's view of the FDCPA, right, what it means, what it says in a collaborative way; nonbinding, right, not as in a formal opinion, what do those in the room think about that kind of a collaborative approach that would be educational and hope fully help consumers who are on their own trying to sort through this? Tom.

MR. ROMOLA: Years ago, and I assume they're still around, there used to be booklets that

know, Supreme Court decisions from, like, the 18th Century that make no sense, that would be very helpful, I think, to everyone, and I think that there's probably consensus on that here. I think it would be a great idea.

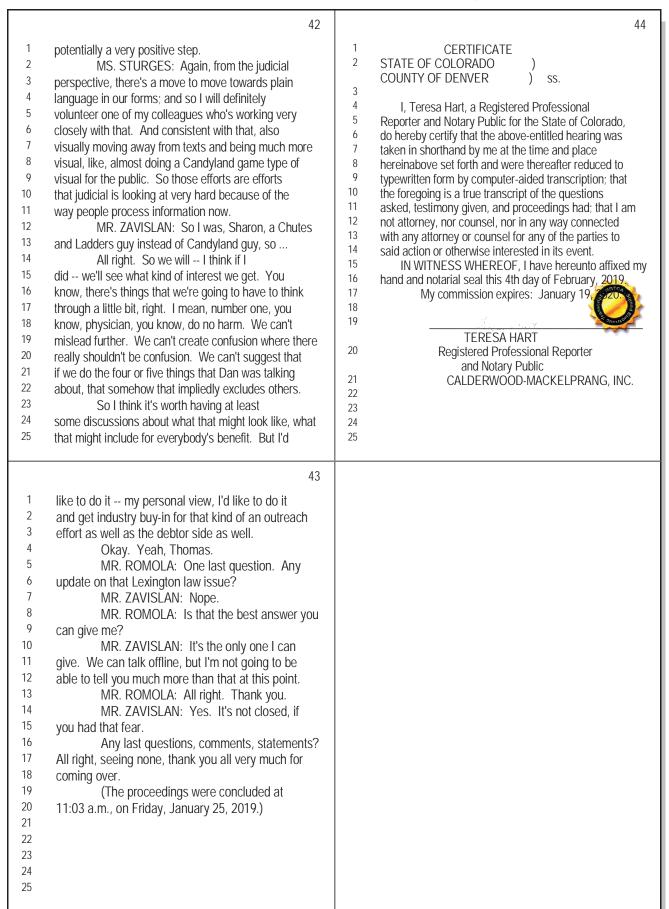
MR. ZAVISLAN: So let me just make this offer: I'm going to give you my email address, which is jan.zavislan@coag.gov. Now, this is not an invitation for you to email me about every single possible thing.

What I'm looking for is if you are interested down the road in participating in a group discussion and/or drafting of such a thing, maybe it's updating the brochures, maybe it's providing some better guidance, I can't think of a better public service that we could offer in conjunction with our constituencies, both the regulated side and the consumer side, on something that actually would be meaningful out there as a -- informal maybe, but as a public document.

So, please, only if you are interested in participating in that kind of a process. And I can't guarantee it's going to happen, but it's certainly a conversation that I'll have with Phil Weiser and with the new administrator, as I think it would be

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12 (Pages 42 to 44)

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