



STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Department of Financial Protection and Innovation

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DFPI Continues Yearlong Effort Targeting Unlawful, Deceptive Debt Collectors with Four New Actions

SACRAMENTO — In a continuation of a yearlong crackdown on unscrupulous debt collectors, the California Department of Financial Protection and Innovation (DFPI) announced today that it has issued enforcement actions against four entities for unlicensed debt collection activity under the [Debt Collection Licensing Act \(DCLA\)](#) and unfair, deceptive, or abusive acts or practices (UDAAP) in violation of the [California Consumer Financial Protection Law \(CCFPL\)](#) and related federal laws and regulations.

The DFPI issued actions against [Centennial Services](#), [Bellgate Associates](#), [Moss Westinghouse and Associates](#), and [Prodigy Portfolio Management](#), ordering each entity to desist and refrain from engaging in unlawful and deceptive practices, such as:

- Failing to identify themselves as debt collectors.
- Making false and misleading statements about payment requirements.
- Threatening unlawful action because of nonpayment of a debt.
- Contacting the consumer at a prohibited time of day.
- Making false claims of pending lawsuits or legal process.
- Making false claims about the character, amount, or legal status of the debt.
- Failing to provide a “validation notice” as required by [federal law](#).
- Threatening to sue on time-barred debt in violation of [federal regulations](#).

The DFPI ordered the subjects to pay penalties for each of the actions described above, totaling \$87,500, and to desist and refrain from violating consumer protection laws. These actions follow previous debt collection action sweeps issued on October 11, 2022, [January 30, 2023](#), and [June 5, 2023](#).

How Consumers Can Protect Themselves

The DFPI is responsible for protecting consumers, and making sure financial service providers like debt collectors are following the law. The Department provides licensure, regulation, and oversight of California debt collection practices under the [California Consumer Financial Protection Law](#) and the [Debt Collection Licensing Act](#). Both measures help to better protect consumers.

To determine whether a debt collector is licensed, consumers can look them up in the Nationwide Multistate Licensing System (NMLS) Consumer Access database ([nmlsconsumeraccess.org](#)). You can

also check to see whether they have a conditional license or pending application in California by looking them up on the DFPI's [debt collector lookup webpage](#). Learn more about [how to protect yourself from fake debt collectors](#) and your rights regarding [debt collectors](#).

The DFPI encourages consumers who have experienced unfair, deceptive, or abusive acts or practices from a financial service provider to [submit a complaint](#) with the DFPI online.

About DFPI

The California Department of Financial Protection and Innovation (DFPI) protects consumers, regulates financial services, and fosters responsible innovation. The DFPI protects consumers by establishing and enforcing financial regulations that promote transparency and accountability. We empower all Californians to access a fair and equitable financial marketplace through education and preventing potential risks, fraud, and abuse. Learn more at dfpi.ca.gov.

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