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STEVEN W. BALSTER
1
   IL Bar No. 6189072, sbalster@ftc.gov
   JONATHAN L. KESSLER
2
   CO Bar No. 15094, jkessler@ftc.gov
3
   MARIA DEL MONACO
4
   OH Bar No. 0067930, mdelmonaco@ftc.gov
   FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION
5
    1111 Superior Avenue, Suite 200
   Cleveland, OH 44114
6
    Tel: 216-263-3455; Fax: 216-263-3426
7
8
   STACY PROCTER (Local Counsel)
    CA Bar No. 221078, sprocter@ftc.gov
9
    FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION
10
    10877 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 700
   Los Angeles, CA 90024
11
    Tel: 310-824-4343; Fax: 310-824-4380
12
    Attorneys for Plaintiff
13
    FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION
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                      UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
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                    CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
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    FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION,
                                        Case No. SACV13-919 DOC (RNBx)
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                             Plaintiff.
                                       FINAL ORDER FOR
                                      ) PERMANENT INJUNCTION
              VS.
21
                                      ) AGAINST DEFENDANT
    A TO Z MARKETING, INC., a
22
                                      ) EVERGREEN LAW OFFICES,
   Nevada corporation, also dba Client
                                        PLLC [249]
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    Services, et al.,
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                          Defendants.
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# ENTRY OF DEFAULT JUDGMENT AND FINAL ORDER FOR PERMANENT INJUNCTION AGAINST DEFENDANT EVERGREEN LAW OFFICES, PLLC

Plaintiff, the Federal Trade Commission ("FTC" or "Commission"), filed its Complaint for Injunctive and Other Equitable Relief pursuant to Sections 13(b) and 19 of the 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. The Commission filed its Amended Complaint on December 16, 2013.

Although Defendant Evergreen Law Offices, PLLC ("Evergreen") signed and returned a Waiver of the Service of Summons (Dkt. 202), it failed to answer the Amended Complaint and a Default was entered against it (Dkt. 209). In light of Evergreen's default and after considering the pleadings, declarations, exhibits, other evidence, and the arguments of counsel, judgment is entered in favor of Plaintiff, Federal Trade Commission, upon the terms set forth below.

### **FINDINGS**

- 1. This Court has jurisdiction over this matter. Venue is proper in this District.
- Evergreen's activities as alleged in the Amended Complaint are in or affecting commerce as "commerce" is defined in Section 4 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 4 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 44.
- 3. The Amended Complaint charges that Evergreen participated in deceptive and unlawful acts or practices in violation of Section 5 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45, and the Mortgage Assistance Relief Services Rule, 16 C.F.R. Part 322 ("MARS Rule"), recodified as Mortgage Assistance Relief Services, 12 C.F.R. Part 1015 ("Regulation O"), in connection with the marketing and sale of mortgage assistance relief services ("MARS").
- 4. Specifically, the Amended Complaint alleges that since about 2011, Evergreen participated in a common enterprise that sold home-loan modification services. (Dkt. 176). The Amended Complaint alleges that it did so by misrepresenting the likelihood of obtaining a loan modification and by misrepresenting the benefits of loan audits, in violation of Section 5 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45. The Amended Complaint also alleges that Evergreen violated the MARS Rule by collecting advance fees for the provision of MARS, by making material misrepresentations in the provision

- of MARS, and by failing to make disclosures as required by the MARS Rule.
- 5. Evergreen had proper notice of this lawsuit. On January 27, 2014, it waived personal service of the Amended Complaint (Dkt. 202). It never filed an Answer to the Amended Complaint.
- 6. On May 2, 2014, the FTC filed an Application for Clerk's Entry of Default against Evergreen and a Declaration of Plaintiff's Counsel in support of the application (Dkt. 205), and the Clerk entered a Default (Dkt. 209).
- 7. Pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 55(b), the Court enters this default judgment against Evergreen Law Offices, PLLC. Furthermore, from the affidavit filed by the Federal Trade Commission, it appears that the Commission is entitled to equitable monetary relief against Evergreen in the amount of four million three hundred eight thousand seven hundred three dollars (\$4,308,703.00).
- 8. This Final Judgment is in addition to, and not in lieu of, any other civil or criminal remedies that may be provided by law.
- 9. Entry of this Final Judgment is in the public interest.
- 10. Pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 65(d), this Final Judgment is binding upon Defendant, its officers, agents, servants, employees, attorneys, corporations, successors and assigns, and upon those persons or entities in

active concert or participation with them who receive actual notice of this Final Judgment by personal service or otherwise.

- 11. This action is the "commencement or continuation of an action or proceeding by a governmental unit to enforce such governmental unit's police or regulatory power," as set forth in 11 U.S.C. § 362(b)(4). Any bankruptcy petition, voluntary or involuntary, does not automatically stay this action.
- 12. Any bankruptcy petition, voluntary or involuntary, does not divest this Court of jurisdiction to enter this Judgment.

#### **DEFINITIONS**

## A. "Assisting Others" includes:

- performing customer service functions, including receiving or responding to consumer complaints;
- formulating or providing, or arranging for the formulation or
  provision of, any advertising or marketing material, including any
  telephone sales script, direct mail solicitation, or the design, text, or
  use of images of any Internet website, email, or other electronic
  communication;
- 3. formulating or providing, or arranging for the formulation or provision of, any marketing support material or service, including web

or Internet Protocol addresses or domain name registration for any Internet websites, affiliate marketing services, or media placement services;

- 4. providing names of, or assisting in the generation of, potential customers;
- 5. performing marketing, billing, or payment services of any kind; or
- 6. acting or serving as an owner, officer, director, manager, or principal of any entity.
- B. "Defendant" means Evergreen Law Offices, PLLC.
- C. "Federal homeowner relief or financial stability program" means any program (including its sponsoring agencies, telephone numbers, and Internet websites) operated or endorsed by the United States government to provide relief to homeowners or stabilize the economy, including but not limited to:
  - 1. the Making Home Affordable Program;
  - 2. the Financial Stability Plan;
  - 3. the Troubled Asset Relief Program and any other program sponsored or operated by the United States Department of the Treasury;
  - 4. the HOPE for Homeowners program, any program operated or created pursuant to the Helping Families Save Their Homes Act, and any

- other program sponsored or operated by the Federal Housing Administration; or
- 5. any program sponsored or operated by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development ("HUD"), the HOPE NOW Alliance, the Homeownership Preservation Foundation, or any other HUD-approved housing counseling agency.
- D. "Financial product or service" means any product, service, plan, or program represented, expressly or by implication, to:
  - 1. provide any consumer, arrange for any consumer to receive, or assist any consumer in receiving, a loan or other extension of credit;
  - 2. provide any consumer, arrange for any consumer to receive, or assist any consumer in receiving, credit, debit, or stored value cards;
  - 3. improve, repair, or arrange to improve or repair, any consumer's credit record, credit history, or credit rating; or
  - 4. provide advice or assistance to improve any consumer's credit record, credit history, or credit rating.
- E. "*Person*" means a natural person, organization, or other legal entity, including a corporation, partnership, limited liability company, proprietorship, association, cooperative, or any other group or combination acting as an entity.

- F. "Secured or unsecured debt relief product or service" means, with respect to any mortgage, loan, debt, or obligation between a person and one or more secured or unsecured creditors or debt collectors, any product, service, plan, or program represented, expressly or by implication, to:
  - stop, prevent, or postpone any mortgage deed of foreclosure sale for a
    person's dwelling, any other sale of collateral, any repossession of a
    person's dwelling or other collateral, or otherwise save a person's
    dwelling or other collateral from foreclosure or repossession;
  - 2. negotiate, obtain, or arrange a modification, or renegotiate, settle, or in any way alter any terms of the mortgage, loan, debt, or obligation, including a reduction in the amount of interest, principal balance, monthly payments, or fees owed by a person to a secured or unsecured creditor or debt collector;
  - obtain any forbearance or modification in the timing of payments from any secured or unsecured holder or servicer of any mortgage, loan, debt, or obligation;
  - 4. negotiate, obtain, or arrange any extension of the period of time within which a person may (i) cure his or her default on the mortgage, loan, debt, or obligation, (ii) reinstate his or her mortgage, loan, debt, or obligation, (iii) redeem a dwelling or other collateral, or

- (iv) exercise any right to reinstate the mortgage, loan, debt, or obligation or redeem a dwelling or other collateral;
- obtain any waiver of an acceleration clause or balloon payment contained in any promissory note or contract secured by any dwelling or other collateral; or
- 6. negotiate, obtain, or arrange (i) a short sale of a dwelling or other collateral, (ii) a deed-in-lieu of foreclosure, or (iii) any other disposition of a mortgage, loan, debt, or obligation other than a sale to a third party that is not the secured or unsecured loan holder.

The foregoing shall include any manner of claimed assistance, including, but not limited to, auditing or examining a person's application for the mortgage, loan, debt, or obligation.

G. "Telemarketing" means any plan, program, or campaign which is conducted to induce the purchase of goods or services by use of one or more telephones, and which involves a telephone call, whether or not covered by the Telemarketing Sales Rule.

**ORDER** 

II.

# BAN ON SECURED AND UNSECURED DEBT RELIEF PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- I. **IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED** that Defendant, whether acting directly or through any other person, is permanently restrained and enjoined from:
  - A. advertising, marketing, promoting, offering for sale, or selling any secured or unsecured debt relief product or service; and
  - B. assisting others engaged in advertising, marketing, promoting, offering for sale, or selling any secured or unsecured debt relief product or service.

# PROHIBITED MISREPRESENTATIONS RELATING TO FINANCIAL PRODUCTS OR SERVICES

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Defendant, Defendant's officers, agents, servants, employees, and attorneys, and all other persons or entities in active concert or participation with any of them, who receive actual notice of this Order, whether acting directly or indirectly, in connection with advertising, marketing, promoting, offering for sale, or selling any financial product or service, are permanently restrained and enjoined from misrepresenting or assisting others in misrepresenting, expressly or by implication, any material fact, including:

- A. the terms or rates that are available for any loan or other extension of credit, including:
  - i. closing costs or other fees;
  - ii. the payment schedule, monthly payment amount(s), any balloon payment, or other payment terms;
  - iii. the interest rate(s), annual percentage rate(s), or finance charge(s), and whether they are fixed or adjustable;
  - iv. the loan amount, credit amount, draw amount, or outstanding balance; the loan term, draw period, or maturity; or any other term of credit;
  - v. the amount of cash to be disbursed to the borrower out of the proceeds, or the amount of cash to be disbursed on behalf of the borrower to any third parties;
  - vi. whether any specified minimum payment amount covers both interest and principal, and whether the credit has or can result in negative amortization; or
  - vii. that the credit does not have a prepayment penalty or whether subsequent refinancing may trigger a prepayment penalty and/or other fees;
- B. the savings associated with the loan or other extension of credit;

III.

- C. the ability to improve or otherwise affect a consumer's credit record, credit history, credit rating, or ability to obtain credit, including that a consumer's credit record, credit history, or credit rating, or ability to obtain credit can be improved by permanently removing current, accurate negative information from the consumer's credit record or history; or
- D. that a consumer will receive legal representation.

# PROHIBITED MISREPRESENTATIONS RELATING TO ANY PRODUCTS OR SERVICES

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Defendant, Defendant's officers, agents, servants, employees, and attorneys, and all other persons or entities in active concert or participation with any of them, who receive actual notice of this Order, whether acting directly or indirectly, in connection with advertising, marketing, promoting, offering for sale, or selling any product, service, plan, or program are permanently restrained and enjoined from misrepresenting or assisting others in misrepresenting, expressly or by implication, any material fact, including:

A. any material aspect of the nature or terms of any refund, cancellation, exchange, or repurchase policy, including but not limited to the likelihood of a consumer obtaining a full or partial refund, or the

- circumstances in which a full or partial refund will be granted to the consumer;
- B. that any person is affiliated with, endorsed or approved by, or otherwise connected to any other person; government entity; any federal homeowner relief or financial stability program; public, non-profit, or other non-commercial program; or any other program;
- C. the nature, expertise, position, or job title of any person who provides any product, service, plan, or program;
- D. the person who will provide any product, service, plan, or program to any consumer;
- E. that any person providing a testimonial has purchased, received, or used the product, service, plan, or program;
- F. that the experience represented in a testimonial of the product, service, plan, or program represents the person's actual experience resulting from the use of the product, service, plan, or program under the circumstances depicted in the advertisement;
- G. the total costs to purchase, receive, or use, or the quantity of, the product, service, plan, or program;
- H. any material restriction, limitation, or condition on purchasing, receiving, or using the product, service, plan, or program; or

I. any other material fact concerning any aspect of the performance,
 efficacy, nature, or characteristics of the product, service, plan, or
 program.

## **CUSTOMER INFORMATION**

- IV. IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Defendant, Defendant's officers, agents, servants, employees, and attorneys, and all other persons or entities in active concert or participation with any of them, who receive actual notice of this Order, whether acting directly or indirectly, are permanently restrained or enjoined from directly or indirectly:
  - A. failing to provide sufficient customer information to enable the Commission to efficiently administer consumer redress. If a representative of the Commission requests in writing any information related to redress, Defendant must provide it, in the form prescribed by the Commission, within 14 days.
  - B. disclosing, using, or benefiting from customer information, including the name, address, telephone number, email address, Social Security number, other identifying information, or any data that enables access to a customer's account (including a credit card, bank account, or other financial account), that Defendant obtained prior to entry of this

Order in connection with the marketing and sale of secured or unsecured debt relief products or services; and

- C. disposing of such customer information without written authorization from the Commission; and
- D. failing to dispose of such customer information in all forms in their possession, custody, or control within thirty (30) days of receipt of written authorization from the Commission. Disposal shall be by means that protect against unauthorized access to the customer information, such as by burning, pulverizing, or shredding any papers, and by erasing or destroying any electronic media, to ensure that the customer information cannot be practicably read or reconstructed.

*Provided, however*, that customer information need not be disposed of, and may be disclosed, to the extent requested by a government agency or required by law, regulation, or court order.

#### MONETARY JUDGMENT

## V. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that:

A. Judgment in the amount of four million three hundred eight thousand seven hundred three dollars (\$4,308,703.00) is entered against Defendant, jointly and severally, as equitable monetary relief.

- B. Defendant relinquishes dominion and all legal and equitable right, title, and interest in all of Defendant's assets that are subject to the asset freeze provisions in the Stipulated Preliminary Injunction entered on July 18, 2013. Defendant may not seek the return of any assets that are part of the receivership estate. If Defendant retains any assets that are subject to the asset freeze and not currently controlled or held by the Receiver as part of the receivership estate, Defendant shall turn over those assets to the Receiver within ten days of entry of this Order. Thereafter, Defendant may not seek the return of those assets.
- C. The facts alleged in the Amended Complaint will be taken as true, without further proof, in any subsequent civil litigation by or on behalf of the Commission, including in a proceeding to enforce its rights to any payment or monetary judgment pursuant to this Order, such as a nondischargeability complaint in any bankruptcy case.
- D. the facts alleged in the Amended Complaint establish all elements necessary to sustain an action by the Commission pursuant to Section 523(a)(2)(A) of the Bankruptcy Code, 11 U.S.C. § 523(a)(2)(A), and this Order will have collateral estoppel effect for such purposes.

- E. Defendant acknowledges that its Taxpayer Identification Number (Social Security Number or Employment Identification Number), which Defendant must submit to the Commission, may be used for collecting and reporting on any delinquent amount arising out of this Order, in accordance with 31 U.S.C. § 7701.
- F. All money paid to the Commission pursuant to this Order may be deposited into a fund administered by the Commission or its designee to be used for equitable relief, including consumer redress and any attendant expenses for the administration of any redress fund. If a representative of the Commission decides that direct redress to consumers is wholly or partially impracticable or money remains after redress is completed, the Commission may apply any remaining money for such other equitable relief (including consumer information remedies) as it determines to be reasonably related to Defendant's practices alleged in the Amended Complaint. Any money not used for such equitable relief is to be deposited to the U.S. Treasury as disgorgement. Defendant has no right to challenge any actions the Commission or its representatives may take pursuant to this Subsection.

## **COOPERATION**

VI.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Defendant must fully cooperate with representatives of the Commission in this case and in any investigation related to or associated with the transactions or occurrences that are the subject of the Amended Complaint. Defendant must provide truthful and complete information, evidence, and testimony. Defendant must cause officers, employees, representatives, or agents to appear for interviews, discovery, hearings, trials, and any other proceedings that a Commission representative may reasonably request upon 5 days written notice, or other reasonable notice, at such places and times as a Commission representative may designate, without the service of a subpoena. Defendant and its officers, employees, representatives, and agents shall be provided witness fees and reasonable travel expenses pursuant to applicable federal laws.

#### ORDER ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- VII. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that Defendant obtain acknowledgments of receipt of this Order:
  - A. Defendant, within 7 days of entry of this Order, must submit to the Commission an acknowledgment of receipt of this Order sworn under penalty of perjury.

- B. For 3 years after entry of this Order, Defendant must deliver a copy of this Order to: (1) all principals, officers, directors, and LLC managers and members; (2) all employees, agents, and representatives who participate in telemarketing and/or the advertising, marketing, promotion, offering for sale or sale of any financial product or service; and (3) any business entity resulting from any change in structure as set forth in the Section titled Compliance Reporting. Delivery must occur within 7 days of entry of this Order for current personnel. For all others, delivery must occur before they assume their responsibilities.
- C. From each individual or entity to which Defendant delivered a copy of this Order, Defendant must obtain, within 30 days, a signed and dated acknowledgement of receipt of this Order.

#### **COMPLIANCE REPORTING**

- VIII. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that Defendant make timely submissions to the Commission:
  - A. One year after entry of this Order, Defendant must submit a compliance report, sworn under penalty of perjury (a) identifying the primary physical, postal, and email address and telephone number, as designated points of contact, which representatives of the Commission

may use to communicate with Defendant; (b) identifying all of Defendant's businesses by all of their names, telephone numbers, and physical, postal, email, and Internet addresses; (c) describing the activities of each business, including the goods and services offered, the means of advertising, marketing, and sales, and the involvement of any other defendant in this action; (d) describing in detail whether and how Defendant is in compliance with each section of this Order; and (e) providing a copy of each Order Acknowledgment obtained pursuant to this Order, unless previously submitted to the Commission.

B. For 10 years after entry of this Order, Defendant must submit a compliance notice, sworn under penalty of perjury, within 14 days of any change in the following: (a) any designated point of contact; or (b) the structure of Defendant or any entity that Defendant has any ownership interest in or controls directly or indirectly that may affect compliance obligations arising under this Order, including: creation, merger, sale, or dissolution of the entity or any subsidiary, parent, or affiliate that engages in any acts or practices subject to this Order.

- C. Defendant must submit to the Commission notice of the filing of any bankruptcy petition, insolvency proceeding, or similar proceeding by or against Defendant within 14 days of its filing.
- D. Any submission to the Commission required by this Order to be sworn under penalty of perjury must be true and accurate and comply with 28 U.S.C. § 1746, such as by concluding: "I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on: \_\_\_\_\_\_" and supplying the date, signatory's full name, title (if applicable), and signature.
- E. Unless otherwise directed by a Commission representative in writing, all submissions to the Commission pursuant to this Order must be emailed to <a href="DEbrief@ftc.gov">DEbrief@ftc.gov</a> or sent by overnight courier (not the U.S. Postal Service) to: Associate Director for Enforcement, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington DC 20580. The subject line must begin: FTC v. A to Z Marketing, Inc., et al., Case No. SACV13-919-DOC (RNBx) (C.D. Cal.) [FTC File No. X130049].

RECORDKEEPING

- IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Defendant must create certain records for 10 years after entry of this Order, and retain such records for 5 years.

  Specifically, Defendant for any business it individually or collectively with any other Defendant in this action is a majority owner or controls directly or indirectly, must create and retain the following records:
  - A. accounting records showing the revenues from all goods or services sold;
  - B. personnel records showing, for each person providing services, whether as an employee or otherwise, that person's: name; addresses; telephone numbers; job title or position; dates of service; and (if applicable) the reason for termination;
  - C. records of all consumer complaints and refund requests, whether received directly or indirectly, such as through a third party, and any response;
  - D. all records necessary to demonstrate full compliance with each provision of this Order, including all submissions to the Commission; and
  - E. a copy of each unique advertisement or other marketing material.

### **COMPLIANCE MONITORING**

- X. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that, for purposes of monitoring Defendant's compliance with this Order:
  - A. Within 14 days of receipt of a written request from a representative of the Commission, Defendant must: submit additional compliance reports or other requested information, which must be sworn under penalty of perjury; appear for depositions; and produce documents for inspection and copying. The Commission is also authorized to obtain discovery, without further leave of court, using any of the procedures prescribed by Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 29, 30 (including telephonic depositions), 31, 33, 34, 36, 45, and 69.
  - B. For matters concerning this Order, the Commission is authorized to communicate directly with Defendant. Defendant must permit representatives of the Commission to interview any employee or other person affiliated with Defendant who has agreed to such an interview. The person interviewed may have counsel present.
  - C. The Commission may use all other lawful means, including posing, through its representatives as consumers, suppliers, or other individuals or entities, to Defendant or any individual or entity affiliated with Defendant, without the necessity of identification or

1		prior notice. Nothing in this Order limits the Commission's lawful
2		use of compulsory process, pursuant to Sections 9 and 20 of the FTC
3		Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 49, 57b-1.
4		RETENTION OF JURISDICTION
5		RETENTION OF JURISDICTION
6	XI.	IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this Court retains jurisdiction of this
7		matter for purposes of construction, modification, and enforcement of this
8		Order.
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12	SO ORDERED this 2nd day of September, 2014	
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14		Llavid O. Carter
15		DAVID O. CARTER
16		United States District Judge
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