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IN THE SENATE

SENATE BILL NO. 1007

BY COMMERCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

AN ACT RELATING TO COLLECTION AGENCIES; AMENDING SECTION 26-2222, IDAHO CODE, TO DEFINE A TERM AND TO MAKE TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS; AMENDING SECTION 26-2224, IDAHO CODE, TO PROVIDE THAT LICENSE APPLICATIONS SHOULD BE FILED THROUGH THE NATIONWIDE MORTGAGE LICENSING SYSTEM AND REGISTRY; AMENDING SECTION 26-2228, IDAHO CODE, TO PROVIDE THAT THE DIRECTOR SHALL PROMULGATE A CERTAIN RULE; AMENDING SECTION 26-2229A, IDAHO CODE, TO AUTHORIZE THE COLLECTION OF CERTAIN INTEREST, FEES, CHARGES, AND EXPENSES AND TO MAKE TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS; AMENDING SECTION 26-2231, 10 IDAHO CODE, TO REVISE A PROVISION REGARDING RENEWAL OF A LICENCE, TO PROVIDE FOR EXPIRATION OF A LICENSE, AND TO PROVIDE CONDITIONS FOR REIN-11 STATEMENT OF A LICENSE; REPEALING SECTION 26-2232, IDAHO CODE, RELATING 12 TO COLLECTION AGENCY SURETY BONDS; REPEALING SECTION 26-2232A, IDAHO 13 14 CODE, RELATING TO DEBT COUNSELORS, CREDIT COUNSELORS, CREDIT REPAIR 15 ORGANIZATIONS, AND BONDS; AMENDING SECTION 26-2237, IDAHO CODE, TO PROVIDE A CODE REFERENCE; AMENDING CHAPTER 22, TITLE 26, IDAHO CODE, 16 BY THE ADDITION OF A NEW SECTION 26-2252, IDAHO CODE, TO ESTABLISH THE 17 COLLECTION AGENCY RECOVERY FUND, TO PROVIDE FOR USES OF THE FUND, AND TO 18 19 PROVIDE EXCEPTIONS; AMENDING CHAPTER 22, TITLE 26, IDAHO CODE, BY THE ADDITION OF A NEW SECTION 26-2253, IDAHO CODE, TO PROVIDE FOR FUNDING 20 OF THE COLLECTION AGENCY RECOVERY FUND, TO PROVIDE FOR ADJUSTMENT OF 21 FEES, TO PROVIDE FOR INTEREST, AND TO PROVIDE THAT MONEY IN THE FUND 22 MAY BE APPLIED TO CERTAIN USES; AMENDING CHAPTER 22, TITLE 26, IDAHO 23 CODE, BY THE ADDITION OF A NEW SECTION 26-2254, IDAHO CODE, TO PROVIDE A 24 STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS FOR FILING A CLAIM; AMENDING CHAPTER 22, TITLE 25 26, IDAHO CODE, BY THE ADDITION OF A NEW SECTION 26-2255, IDAHO CODE, 26 TO PROVIDE PROCEDURES FOR RECOVERY FROM THE COLLECTION AGENCY RECOVERY 27 FUND; AMENDING CHAPTER 22, TITLE 26, IDAHO CODE, BY THE ADDITION OF A 28 NEW SECTION 26-2256, IDAHO CODE, TO PROVIDE FOR RECOVERY LIMITS FROM 29 THE COLLECTION AGENCY RECOVERY FUND; AND AMENDING CHAPTER 22, TITLE 26, 30 31 IDAHO CODE, BY THE ADDITION OF A NEW SECTION 26-2257, IDAHO CODE, TO PRO-VIDE FOR REVOCATION OF A LICENSE FOR PAYMENT FROM THE COLLECTION AGENCY 32 RECOVERY FUND IN CERTAIN INSTANCES.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Idaho: 34

SECTION 1. That Section 26-2222, Idaho Code, be, and the same is hereby 35 amended to read as follows: 36

26-2222. DEFINITIONS. As used in this act:

(1) "Agent" means any person who, for compensation or gain, or in the expectation of compensation or gain, contacts persons in Idaho in connection with the business activities of a licensee or person required to be licensed under this act.

(2) "Business funds" means all moneys belonging to or due a licensee or person required to be licensed in connection with the business activities authorized under this act.

- (3) "Collection activities" means the activities enumerated in subsections (2) through (6) of section 26-2223, Idaho Code.
- (4) "Collection agency" means a person who engages in any of the activities enumerated in subsections (2) through (6) of section 26-2223, Idaho Code.
- (5) "Credit repair organization" means any person engaged in any of the activities enumerated in subsection (8) of section 26-2223, Idaho Code. A credit repair organization does not include:
 - (a) A consumer reporting agency, as defined in 15 U.S.C. section 1681a(f), that provides consumer reports based on information furnished by creditors or any affiliate or subsidiary of such consumer reporting agency as defined by rule promulgated by the director;
 - (b) A person who has an ongoing contractual arrangement with a consumer reporting agency, as described in <u>subsection (5) paragraph</u> (a) of this <u>sub</u>section, to obtain consumer reports from a consumer reporting agency for the purposes of:
 - (i) Reselling such report, or any information contained in or derived from such report, to a consumer; or
 - (ii) Monitoring information in such report on behalf of a consumer; or
 - (c) A person to the extent that such person advertises, markets, provides or facilitates consumer access to the products or services offered or provided by:
 - (i) An entity described in $\frac{\text{subsection (5)}}{\text{paragraph}}$ (a) of this subsection; or
 - (ii) A person described in subsection (5) paragraph (b) of this subsection.
- (6) "Creditor" means any person who offers or extends credit creating a debt or to whom a debt is owed.
- (7) "Creditor client" means any person who transfers or assigns to a collection agency licensee or person required to be so licensed under this act, any account, bill, claim or other indebtedness for collection purposes.
- (8) "Creditor funds" means all funds due and owing a creditor by a licensee or person required to be licensed under this act.
- (9) "Debt counselor" or "credit counselor" means any person engaged in any of the activities enumerated in subsection (7) of section 26-2223, Idaho Code.
 - (10) "Department" means the Idaho department of finance.
 - (11) "Director" means the director of the Idaho department of finance.
- (12) "Licensee" means a person who has obtained a license under this act.
- (13) "Nationwide mortgage licensing system and registry" or "NMLSR" means a licensing system for all entities required to be licensed under this chapter, developed and maintained by the conference of state bank supervisors and the American association of residential mortgage regulators.
- $\underline{\text{(14)}}$ "Net collections" means all funds that are due to creditors from the licensee pursuant to the contract between the licensee and creditor, or

licensee and debtor without taking into account any offset or funds due from the creditor to the licensee, because of the creditor having collected any part of the account due, plus all funds that the licensee agreed to return to debtors or that were not to be applied to debts.

- (145) "Person" means any individual, corporation, association, partnership, limited liability partnership, trust, company, limited liability company, or unincorporated association.
- SECTION 2. That Section 26-2224, Idaho Code, be, and the same is hereby amended to read as follows:
- 26-2224. LICENSE APPLICATION. Every applicant for a license under this act shall file with the director, through the NMLSR, an application $\frac{1}{1}$ in $\frac{1}{1}$ and $\frac{1}{1}$ and $\frac{1}{1}$ include:
- (1) The name of the applicant; if the applicant is a corporation, a list of its officers and directors and their addresses; if the applicant is a partnership, a list of the partners and their addresses; or if the applicant is a limited liability company, a list of its members or managers and their addresses.
 - (2) The street address of the applicant's principal location.
 - (3) All names by which the applicant engages in collection activities.
- (4) The names of all persons and organizations with which the applicant is affiliated, and the location of the principal office or place of business of each such affiliate.
- (5) A complete description of the business to be conducted, or plan of operation contemplated, by the applicant in this state.
- (6) The name, address and qualifications of a natural person possessing a minimum of three (3) years of experience related to the business to be conducted under this act who will supervise the applicant's office locations from which business activities in this state will be conducted.
- (7) Copies of all contracts, forms, form letters, and advertisements or solicitations to be used by the applicant in its business activities under this act, which must accompany the application and be identified as exhibits by number.
- (8) If the applicant is a corporation, a limited liability company, partnership, or limited liability partnership, a copy of its articles of incorporation, articles of organization, partnership agreement, or operating agreement, duly authenticated.
- (9) A list of the names, business addresses and telephone numbers of all agents who will contact persons or solicit business for the applicant in this state.
- (10) The name and business address of the applicant's agent for service of process located in this state.
- (11) A nonrefundable application fee of one hundred fifty dollars (\$150).
- (12) An agreement of consent authorizing the director to examine any and all of the applicant's financial accounts used for business activities under this act.
- (13) Such other information concerning the applicant as the director may reasonably require. Such application shall be executed and verified on oath by the applicant. Information required at the time of application,

except for advertisements and solicitations, shall be updated and filed with the director as necessary to keep the information current.

 SECTION 3. That Section 26-2228, Idaho Code, be, and the same is hereby amended to read as follows:

- 26-2228. POWERS OF THE DIRECTOR. In addition to any other duties authorized by law, the director shall:
 - (1) Administer and enforce the provisions and requirements of this act;
- (2) Conduct investigations and issue subpoenas as necessary to determine whether a person has violated any provision of this act, rule or order hereunder;
- (3) Conduct examinations of the books and records of licensees related to business activities authorized under this act and conduct investigations as necessary and proper for the enforcement of the provisions of this act, rules or orders hereunder;
- (4) Pursuant to chapter 52, title 67, Idaho Code, issue orders and promulgate rules that, in the opinion of the director, are necessary to execute, enforce and effectuate the purposes of this act; and, including appointment of a volunteer advisory board comprised of individuals who represent licensees subject to this act
- (5) Require that all funds collected by the department under this act be deposited into the finance administrative account pursuant to section 67-2702, Idaho Code.
- SECTION 4. That Section 26-2229A, Idaho Code, be, and the same is hereby amended to read as follows:
- 26-2229A. REQUIREMENT OF FAIR, OPEN AND HONEST DEALING -- PROHIBITED PRACTICES. (1) Every licensee or person required to be licensed under this act and its agents shall deal openly, fairly, and honestly without deception in the conduct of its business activities in this state under this act.
- (2) When not inconsistent with the statutes of this state, the provisions of the federal fair debt collection practices act, 15 U.S.C. section 1692_{7} et seq., as amended, may be enforced by the director against collection agencies licensed or required to be licensed under the provisions of this act.
- (3) In every instance where a collection agency licensee has a managerial or financial interest in a creditor client, or where a creditor client has a managerial or financial interest in a collection agency licensee, disclosure of such interest must be made on each and every contact with a debtor in seeking to make a collection of any account, claim, or other indebtedness.
- (4) No collection agency licensee, or collection agency required to be licensed under this act, or agent of such collection agency shall collect or attempt to collect any interest or other charges, fees, or expenses incidental to the principal obligation unless such interest or incidental fees, charges, or expenses:
 - (a) Are expressly authorized by statute;
 - (b) Are allowed by court ruling against the debtor;
 - (c) Are expressly authorized by the agreement creating the debt, except as otherwise prohibited by law;

(d) Have been judicially determined;

- $\overline{(\text{de})}$ Are provided for in a written form agreement, signed by both the debtor and the licensee, and which has the prior approval of the director with respect to the terms of the agreement and amounts of the fees, interest, charges and expenses; or
- (\underline{ef}) Reasonably relate to the actual cost associated with processing a demand draft or other form of electronic payment on behalf of a debtor for a debt payment, provided that the debtor has preauthorized the method of payment and has been notified in advance that such payment may be made by reasonable alternative means that will not result in additional charges, fees or expenses to the debtor.
- (5) No person shall sell, distribute or make use of solicitations, collection letters, demand forms or other printed matter $\frac{1}{2}$ are made similar to or resemble governmental forms or documents, or legal forms used in civil or criminal proceedings.
- (6) No person shall use any trade name, address, insignia, picture, emblem or any other means $\frac{\text{which}}{\text{that}}$ creates any impression that such person is connected with or is an agency of government.
- (7) No person licensed, or required to be licensed under this act, shall misappropriate, transfer, or convert to his own use or benefit, funds belonging to or held for another person in connection with business activities authorized under this act.
- (8) No credit repair organization licensed, or required to be licensed under this act, shall charge or receive money or other valuable consideration for the performance of any service, which the credit repair organization has agreed to perform for any consumer, before such service is fully performed.
- (9) No person licensed or required to be licensed under this act shall make a representation or statement of material fact, or omit to state a material fact, in connection with the offer, sale or performance of any service authorized under this act, if the representation, statement or omission is false or misleading or has the tendency or capacity to be misleading.
- SECTION 5. That Section 26-2231, Idaho Code, be, and the same is hereby amended to read as follows:
- 26-2231. RENEWAL OF LICENSE —— REINSTATEMENT. (1) On or before the fifteenth day of March December 31 of each year, each licensee shall pay to the director, through the NMLSR, a nonrefundable license renewal fee of one hundred dollars (\$100) and shall file with the director, through the NMLSR or as otherwise prescribed by the director, a license renewal form providing complete information as required by the director. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 67-5254, Idaho Code, a license issued under this section shall automatically expire if not timely renewed according to the provisions of this section.
- (2) Failure to fully comply with the license renewal requirements of this section by the fifteenth day of March of each year shall result in automatic expiration of the license as of that date The director may reinstate an expired license during the time period of January 1 through February 28, immediately following expiration of a license, if the director finds that the

1 applicant meets the requirements for licensure under this chapter and after
2 submission to the director of:

(a) A complete application for renewal;

- (b) Payment of the required fees for license renewal, unless previously paid for the period for which the license renewal applies; and
- (c) A reinstatement fee of fifty dollars (\$50.00).
- SECTION 6. That Section 26-2232, Idaho Code, be, and the same is hereby repealed.
- 9 SECTION 7. That Section $\underline{26-2232A}$, Idaho Code, be, and the same is hereby repealed.
 - SECTION 8. That Section 26-2237, Idaho Code, be, and the same is hereby amended to read as follows:
 - 26-2237. FEES -- DISPOSITION OF FUNDS. Except as provided in section 26-2253, Idaho Code, aAll fees provided for in this act shall be paid to the director and by him remitted to the state treasurer pursuant to section 59-1014, Idaho Code, and all such funds shall be deposited to the credit of the finance administrative account in the state dedicated fund.
 - SECTION 9. That Chapter 22, Title 26, Idaho Code, be, and the same is hereby amended by the addition thereto of a <u>NEW SECTION</u>, to be known and designated as Section 26-2252, Idaho Code, and to read as follows:
 - 26-2252. COLLECTION AGENCY RECOVERY FUND. (1) There is hereby created in the state treasury the collection agency recovery fund.
 - (2) As provided in section 26-2255, Idaho Code, the collection agency recovery fund shall be used to reimburse persons to whom an Idaho court awards actual damages resulting from acts constituting violations of this chapter by a collection agent, debt counselor, credit counselor, or credit repair organization who was licensed, or required to be licensed, under this chapter at the time that the act was committed.
 - (3) A recovery from the collection agency recovery fund shall not include punitive damages awarded by a court.
 - (4) Payments from the collection agency recovery fund may not be made to:
 - (a) Any collection agency, debt counselor, credit counselor, or credit repair organization whose acts, or the acts of its agent, were found by a court to be violations of this chapter and a basis of the court's award of a money judgment to a person injured by such violations;
 - (b) Any person who acquires a debt where acts associated with the collection of such debt are found by a court to be violations of this chapter and a basis for a judgment obtained by a person injured by such violations; or
 - (c) The spouse, or personal representative of the spouse, of the judgment debtor or the personal representative of the judgment debtor.

SECTION 10. That Chapter 22, Title 26, Idaho Code, be, and the same is hereby amended by the addition thereto of a $\underline{\text{NEW SECTION}}$, to be known and designated as Section 26-2253, Idaho Code, and to read as follows:

- 26-2253. FUNDING OF THE COLLECTION AGENCY RECOVERY FUND. (1) Upon application for a collection agency, debt counselor, credit counselor, or credit repair license and upon renewal of a license issued under this chapter, the applicant or person seeking renewal shall, in addition to paying the license application or renewal fee required under this chapter, pay a fee to the department, through the NMLSR, for deposit in the collection agency recovery fund as follows:
 - (a) Two hundred fifty dollars (\$250) for home office locations; and
 - (b) One hundred dollars (\$100) for each branch office required to be registered pursuant to section 26-2230, Idaho Code.
- (2) With respect to the collection agency recovery fund fees payable at the time of annual license renewal for licensees under this chapter, the director may adjust the fees within the limits of subsection (1) of this section on a pro rata basis as necessary to maintain a balance of one million five hundred thousand dollars (\$1,500,000) in the collection agency recovery fund, plus an additional amount of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) as set forth in subsection (4) of this section.
- (3) All interest that accrues in the collection agency recovery fund shall be added to the balance of the collection agency recovery fund.
- (4) On an annual basis, the department may apply up to fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) of moneys accumulated in the collection agency recovery fund in excess of one million five hundred thousand dollars (\$1,500,000) to:
 - (a) Fund the department's expenses in administering the collection agency recovery fund;
 - (b) Develop and implement consumer education concerning the industries regulated by the department pursuant to this chapter;
 - (c) Contract for research projects for the state concerning the industries regulated by the department pursuant to this chapter; and
 - (d) Fund the training expenses of department staff members and its attorneys concerning the industries regulated by the department pursuant to this chapter.
- SECTION 11. That Chapter 22, Title 26, Idaho Code, be, and the same is hereby amended by the addition thereto of a <u>NEW SECTION</u>, to be known and designated as Section 26-2254, Idaho Code, and to read as follows:
- 26-2254. STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS. The filing of a verified claim with the court pursuant to section 26-2255, Idaho Code, that is the basis of a claim against the collection agency recovery fund may not be instituted more than one (1) year after termination of all court proceedings concerning such judgment, including appeals.
- SECTION 12. That Chapter 22, Title 26, Idaho Code, be, and the same is hereby amended by the addition thereto of a $\underline{\text{NEW SECTION}}$, to be known and designated as Section 26-2255, Idaho Code, and to read as follows:

26-2255. PROCEDURE FOR RECOVERY. (1) A person who obtains against a collection agent, debt counselor, credit counselor, or credit repair organization a money judgment in an Idaho court, which judgment includes findings of violations of this chapter occurring on or after July 1, 2019, after final judgment has been entered, execution returned unsatisfied, and the judgment has been recorded, may file a verified claim with the court in which the judgment was entered, and on twenty (20) days' written notice to the director and to the judgment debtor, may apply to the court for an order directing payment from the collection agency recovery fund of any unpaid amount on such judgment, subject to section 26-2254, Idaho Code.

- (2) At a hearing on the application, the person seeking recovery from the collection agency recovery fund must show that:
 - (a) The judgment has not been discharged in bankruptcy and is based on facts allowing recovery under section 26-2252, Idaho Code;
 - (b) The person is not a spouse of the judgment debtor or the personal representative of the spouse;
 - (c) The person is not a collection agent, debt counselor, credit counselor, or credit repair organization, as defined in this chapter, who is seeking to recover any compensation regarding the transaction that is the subject of the money judgment upon which a claim against the collection agency recovery fund is based; and
 - (d) Based on the best available information, the judgment debtor lacks sufficient nonexempt assets in this state or any other state to satisfy the judgment.
- (3) Any recovery on the money judgment received by the judgment creditor before payment from the collection agency recovery fund shall be applied by the judgment creditor to reduce the judgment creditor's actual damages which were awarded in the judgment.
- (4) After giving notice and the opportunity for a hearing to the person seeking recovery, to the judgment debtor, and to the department, the court may enter an order requiring the director to pay from the collection agency recovery fund the amount the court finds payable on the claim, pursuant to and in accordance with the limitations contained in this section, if the court is satisfied as to the proof of all matters required to be shown under subsection (2) of this section, and that the person seeking recovery from the collection agency recovery fund has satisfied all of the requirements of this section.
- (5) When the director receives notice that a hearing is scheduled under this section, the director may enter an appearance, file a response, appear at the hearing, or take any other appropriate action as he deems necessary to protect the collection agency recovery fund from spurious or unjust claims and to ensure compliance with the requirements for recovery under this section.
- (6) If the court finds that the aggregate amount of claims against a collection agent, debt counselor, credit counselor, or credit repair organization exceeds the limits set forth in section 26-2256, Idaho Code, the court shall reduce proportionately the amount the court finds payable on the claim.

(7) The department shall provide the court with information concerning the collection agency recovery fund necessary to enable the court to carry out its duties under this section.

SECTION 13. That Chapter 22, Title 26, Idaho Code, be, and the same is hereby amended by the addition thereto of a $\underline{\text{NEW SECTION}}$, to be known and designated as Section 26-2256, Idaho Code, and to read as follows:

- 26-2256. RECOVERY LIMITS. (1) A person entitled to receive payment from the collection agency recovery fund may receive reimbursement of actual damages that shall not include post judgment interest, reasonable attorney's fees, and court costs, as determined by the court, subject to the limitations in subsection (2) of this section and subject to the availability of sufficient funds in the collection agency recovery fund at the time payment is ordered.
- (2) A payment from the collection agency recovery fund may be made by the director only pursuant to a court order as provided by section 26-2255, Idaho Code, in an amount equal to the unsatisfied portion of the creditor's judgment or judgments, or fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000), whichever is less.
- (3) Payments from the collection agency recovery fund shall be limited in the aggregate to two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) against any one (1) licensee. If the total claims against such licensee exceed the aggregate limit of two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000), the court shall prorate payment based on the ratio that a person's claim bears to the other claims filed against such licensee.
- SECTION 14. That Chapter 22, Title 26, Idaho Code, be, and the same is hereby amended by the addition thereto of a $\underline{\text{NEW SECTION}}$, to be known and designated as Section 26-2257, Idaho Code, and to read as follows:
- 26-2257. REVOCATION OF LICENSE FOR PAYMENT FROM THE COLLECTION AGENCY RECOVERY FUND. (1) The director may summarily revoke a license issued under this chapter if the director is required by court order under section 26-2255, Idaho Code, to make a payment from the collection agency recovery fund based on a money judgment that includes findings of violations of this chapter by such licensee.
- (2) A person whose license has been revoked pursuant to subsection (1) of this section is not eligible to be considered for the issuance of a new license under this chapter until the person has repaid in full, plus interest at the current legal rate, the amount paid from the collection agency fund resulting from that person's violation of this chapter.
- (3) This section does not limit the authority of the director to take disciplinary action against a licensee under this chapter for a violation of this chapter or of rules promulgated or orders issued pursuant to this chapter. The repayment in full to the collection agency recovery fund of all obligations of a licensee under this chapter does not nullify or modify the effect of any other disciplinary proceeding brought under this chapter.