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HOUSE BILL NO. 576

Offered January 12, 2022

Prefiled January 11, 2022

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 19.2-368.5:2 and 59.1-200 of the Code of Virginia, relating to stay of debt collection activities by health care providers; prohibited practice under Virginia Consumer Protection Act.

Patron—Hudson

Committee Referral Pending

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 19.2-368.5:2 and 59.1-200 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 19.2-368.5:2. Effect of filing a claim; stay of debt collection activities by health care providers.

A. Whenever a person files a claim under this chapter, all health care providers, as defined in § 8.01-581.1 that have been given notice of a pending claim, shall refrain from all debt collection activities relating to medical treatment received by the person in connection with such claim until an award is made on the claim or until a claim is determined to be noncompensable pursuant to § 19.2-368.11:1. The statute of limitations for collection of such debt shall be tolled during the period in which the applicable health care provider is required to refrain from debt collection activities hereunder.

B. For the purpose of this section, "debt collection activities" means repeatedly calling or writing to the claimant and threatening either to turn the matter over to a debt collection agency or to an attorney for collection, enforcement or filing of other process. The term shall not include routine billing or inquiries about the status of the claim.

C. *Notwithstanding the provisions of § 59.1-199, any violation of the provisions of this section shall constitute a prohibited practice in accordance with § 59.1-200 and shall be subject to any and all of the enforcement provisions of the Virginia Consumer Protection Act (§ 59.1-196 et seq.).*

§ 59.1-200. Prohibited practices.

A. The following fraudulent acts or practices committed by a supplier in connection with a consumer transaction are hereby declared unlawful:

1. Misrepresenting goods or services as those of another;
2. Misrepresenting the source, sponsorship, approval, or certification of goods or services;
3. Misrepresenting the affiliation, connection, or association of the supplier, or of the goods or services, with another;
4. Misrepresenting geographic origin in connection with goods or services;
5. Misrepresenting that goods or services have certain quantities, characteristics, ingredients, uses, or benefits;

6. Misrepresenting that goods or services are of a particular standard, quality, grade, style, or model;

7. Advertising or offering for sale goods that are used, secondhand, repossessed, defective, blemished, deteriorated, or reconditioned, or that are "seconds," irregulars, imperfections, or "not first class," without clearly and unequivocally indicating in the advertisement or offer for sale that the goods are used, secondhand, repossessed, defective, blemished, deteriorated, reconditioned, or are "seconds," irregulars, imperfections or "not first class";

8. Advertising goods or services with intent not to sell them as advertised, or with intent not to sell at the price or upon the terms advertised.

In any action brought under this subdivision, the refusal by any person, or any employee, agent, or servant thereof, to sell any goods or services advertised or offered for sale at the price or upon the terms advertised or offered, shall be prima facie evidence of a violation of this subdivision. This paragraph shall not apply when it is clearly and conspicuously stated in the advertisement or offer by which such goods or services are advertised or offered for sale, that the supplier or offeror has a limited quantity or amount of such goods or services for sale, and the supplier or offeror at the time of such advertisement or offer did in fact have or reasonably expected to have at least such quantity or amount for sale;

9. Making false or misleading statements of fact concerning the reasons for, existence of, or amounts of price reductions;

10. Misrepresenting that repairs, alterations, modifications, or services have been performed or parts installed;

11. Misrepresenting by the use of any written or documentary material that appears to be an invoice or bill for merchandise or services previously ordered;

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HB576

59 12. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, using in any manner the words "wholesale,"
60 "wholesaler," "factory," or "manufacturer" in the supplier's name, or to describe the nature of the
61 supplier's business, unless the supplier is actually engaged primarily in selling at wholesale or in
62 manufacturing the goods or services advertised or offered for sale;

63 13. Using in any contract or lease any liquidated damage clause, penalty clause, or waiver of
64 defense, or attempting to collect any liquidated damages or penalties under any clause, waiver, damages,
65 or penalties that are void or unenforceable under any otherwise applicable laws of the Commonwealth,
66 or under federal statutes or regulations;

67 13a. Failing to provide to a consumer, or failing to use or include in any written document or
68 material provided to or executed by a consumer, in connection with a consumer transaction any
69 statement, disclosure, notice, or other information however characterized when the supplier is required
70 by 16 C.F.R. Part 433 to so provide, use, or include the statement, disclosure, notice, or other
71 information in connection with the consumer transaction;

72 14. Using any other deception, fraud, false pretense, false promise, or misrepresentation in connection
73 with a consumer transaction;

74 15. Violating any provision of § 3.2-6509, 3.2-6512, 3.2-6513, 3.2-6513.1, 3.2-6514, 3.2-6515,
75 3.2-6516, or 3.2-6519 is a violation of this chapter;

76 16. Failing to disclose all conditions, charges, or fees relating to:

77 a. The return of goods for refund, exchange, or credit. Such disclosure shall be by means of a sign
78 attached to the goods, or placed in a conspicuous public area of the premises of the supplier, so as to be
79 readily noticeable and readable by the person obtaining the goods from the supplier. If the supplier does
80 not permit a refund, exchange, or credit for return, he shall so state on a similar sign. The provisions of
81 this subdivision shall not apply to any retail merchant who has a policy of providing, for a period of not
82 less than 20 days after date of purchase, a cash refund or credit to the purchaser's credit card account
83 for the return of defective, unused, or undamaged merchandise upon presentation of proof of purchase.
84 In the case of merchandise paid for by check, the purchase shall be treated as a cash purchase and any
85 refund may be delayed for a period of 10 banking days to allow for the check to clear. This subdivision
86 does not apply to sale merchandise that is obviously distressed, out of date, post season, or otherwise
87 reduced for clearance; nor does this subdivision apply to special order purchases where the purchaser
88 has requested the supplier to order merchandise of a specific or unusual size, color, or brand not
89 ordinarily carried in the store or the store's catalog; nor shall this subdivision apply in connection with a
90 transaction for the sale or lease of motor vehicles, farm tractors, or motorcycles as defined in §
91 46.2-100;

92 b. A layaway agreement. Such disclosure shall be furnished to the consumer (i) in writing at the time
93 of the layaway agreement, or (ii) by means of a sign placed in a conspicuous public area of the
94 premises of the supplier, so as to be readily noticeable and readable by the consumer, or (iii) on the bill
95 of sale. Disclosure shall include the conditions, charges, or fees in the event that a consumer breaches
96 the agreement;

97 16a. Failing to provide written notice to a consumer of an existing open-end credit balance in excess
98 of \$5 (i) on an account maintained by the supplier and (ii) resulting from such consumer's overpayment
99 on such account. Suppliers shall give consumers written notice of such credit balances within 60 days of
100 receiving overpayments. If the credit balance information is incorporated into statements of account
101 furnished consumers by suppliers within such 60-day period, no separate or additional notice is required;

102 17. If a supplier enters into a written agreement with a consumer to resolve a dispute that arises in
103 connection with a consumer transaction, failing to adhere to the terms and conditions of such an
104 agreement;

105 18. Violating any provision of the Virginia Health Club Act, Chapter 24 (§ 59.1-294 et seq.);

106 19. Violating any provision of the Virginia Home Solicitation Sales Act, Chapter 2.1 (§ 59.1-21.1 et
107 seq.);

108 20. Violating any provision of the Automobile Repair Facilities Act, Chapter 17.1 (§ 59.1-207.1 et
109 seq.);

110 21. Violating any provision of the Virginia Lease-Purchase Agreement Act, Chapter 17.4
111 (§ 59.1-207.17 et seq.);

112 22. Violating any provision of the Prizes and Gifts Act, Chapter 31 (§ 59.1-415 et seq.);

113 23. Violating any provision of the Virginia Public Telephone Information Act, Chapter 32
114 (§ 59.1-424 et seq.);

115 24. Violating any provision of § 54.1-1505;

116 25. Violating any provision of the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers' Warranty Adjustment Act, Chapter
117 17.6 (§ 59.1-207.34 et seq.);

118 26. Violating any provision of § 3.2-5627, relating to the pricing of merchandise;

119 27. Violating any provision of the Pay-Per-Call Services Act, Chapter 33 (§ 59.1-429 et seq.);

120 28. Violating any provision of the Extended Service Contract Act, Chapter 34 (§ 59.1-435 et seq.);

29. Violating any provision of the Virginia Membership Camping Act, Chapter 25 (§ 59.1-311 et seq.);
30. Violating any provision of the Comparison Price Advertising Act, Chapter 17.7 (§ 59.1-207.40 et seq.);
31. Violating any provision of the Virginia Travel Club Act, Chapter 36 (§ 59.1-445 et seq.);
32. Violating any provision of §§ 46.2-1231 and 46.2-1233.1;
33. Violating any provision of Chapter 40 (§ 54.1-4000 et seq.) of Title 54.1;
34. Violating any provision of Chapter 10.1 (§ 58.1-1031 et seq.) of Title 58.1;
35. Using the consumer's social security number as the consumer's account number with the supplier, if the consumer has requested in writing that the supplier use an alternate number not associated with the consumer's social security number;
36. Violating any provision of Chapter 18 (§ 6.2-1800 et seq.) of Title 6.2;
37. Violating any provision of § 8.01-40.2;
38. Violating any provision of Article 7 (§ 32.1-212 et seq.) of Chapter 6 of Title 32.1;
39. Violating any provision of Chapter 34.1 (§ 59.1-441.1 et seq.);
40. Violating any provision of Chapter 20 (§ 6.2-2000 et seq.) of Title 6.2;
41. Violating any provision of the Virginia Post-Disaster Anti-Price Gouging Act, Chapter 46 (§ 59.1-525 et seq.);
42. Violating any provision of Chapter 47 (§ 59.1-530 et seq.);
43. Violating any provision of § 59.1-443.2;
44. Violating any provision of Chapter 48 (§ 59.1-533 et seq.);
45. Violating any provision of Chapter 25 (§ 6.2-2500 et seq.) of Title 6.2;
46. Violating the provisions of clause (i) of subsection B of § 54.1-1115;
47. Violating any provision of § 18.2-239;
48. Violating any provision of Chapter 26 (§ 59.1-336 et seq.);
49. Selling, offering for sale, or manufacturing for sale a children's product the supplier knows or has reason to know was recalled by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. There is a rebuttable presumption that a supplier has reason to know a children's product was recalled if notice of the recall has been posted continuously at least 30 days before the sale, offer for sale, or manufacturing for sale on the website of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. This prohibition does not apply to children's products that are used, secondhand or "seconds";
50. Violating any provision of Chapter 44.1 (§ 59.1-518.1 et seq.);
51. Violating any provision of Chapter 22 (§ 6.2-2200 et seq.) of Title 6.2;
52. Violating any provision of § 8.2-317.1;
53. Violating subsection A of § 9.1-149.1;
54. Selling, offering for sale, or using in the construction, remodeling, or repair of any residential dwelling in the Commonwealth, any drywall that the supplier knows or has reason to know is defective drywall. This subdivision shall not apply to the sale or offering for sale of any building or structure in which defective drywall has been permanently installed or affixed;
55. Engaging in fraudulent or improper or dishonest conduct as defined in § 54.1-1118 while engaged in a transaction that was initiated (i) during a declared state of emergency as defined in § 44-146.16 or (ii) to repair damage resulting from the event that prompted the declaration of a state of emergency, regardless of whether the supplier is licensed as a contractor in the Commonwealth pursuant to Chapter 11 (§ 54.1-1100 et seq.) of Title 54.1;
56. Violating any provision of Chapter 33.1 (§ 59.1-434.1 et seq.);
57. Violating any provision of § 18.2-178, 18.2-178.1, or 18.2-200.1;
58. Violating any provision of Chapter 17.8 (§ 59.1-207.45 et seq.);
59. Violating any provision of subsection E of § 32.1-126;
60. Violating any provision of § 54.1-111 relating to the unlicensed practice of a profession licensed under Chapter 11 (§ 54.1-1100 et seq.) or Chapter 21 (§ 54.1-2100 et seq.) of Title 54.1;
61. Violating any provision of § 2.2-2001.5;
62. Violating any provision of Chapter 5.2 (§ 54.1-526 et seq.) of Title 54.1;
63. Violating any provision of § 6.2-312;
64. Violating any provision of Chapter 20.1 (§ 6.2-2026 et seq.) of Title 6.2;
65. Violating any provision of Chapter 26 (§ 6.2-2600 et seq.) of Title 6.2; and
66. Violating any provision of Chapter 54 (§ 59.1-586 et seq.); and
67. Violating any provision of § 19.2-368.5:2.
- B. Nothing in this section shall be construed to invalidate or make unenforceable any contract or lease solely by reason of the failure of such contract or lease to comply with any other law of the Commonwealth or any federal statute or regulation, to the extent such other law, statute, or regulation provides that a violation of such law, statute, or regulation shall not invalidate or make unenforceable

182 such contract or lease.