

**Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services
Division of Financial Regulation, Bulletin No. DFR 2020-14**

TO: All Oregon-regulated collection agencies and debt buyers

DATE: April 30, 2020

RE: Providing assistance to debtors affected by the COVID-19 outbreak

Purpose

This bulletin encourages all Oregon-regulated debt buyers and collection agencies to take active measures to help debtors economically affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. This includes actively listening for consumer hardships, such as reduced work hours, loss of income, loss of employment, and medical issues associated with the pandemic, and responding appropriately to such hardships.

Background

On March 8, 2020, Gov. Kate Brown declared a state of emergency in Oregon to address the spread of COVID-19. State and federal officials have implemented numerous public health measures to slow the spread of COVID-19 and protect people at highest risk for contracting the disease. This global pandemic and the public health measures being taken are creating an economic hardship on people and businesses across Oregon. Many will have difficulty making payments.

On April 17, 2020, Gov. Kate Brown issued Executive Order [20-18](#), preventing creditors and debt collectors from garnishing federal CARES Act recovery rebate payments. The order ensures Oregonians can use the funds for their intended purpose – covering the costs of essential needs during the COVID-19 outbreak. Also, industry associations have been releasing guidance for their members conducting business during this outbreak. Consistent with the executive order and industry efforts, the Division of Financial Regulation, on behalf of the Department of Consumer and Business Services, is providing guidance to our state-regulated debt buyers and collection agencies on reasonable measures that can be used during the outbreak.

Guidance

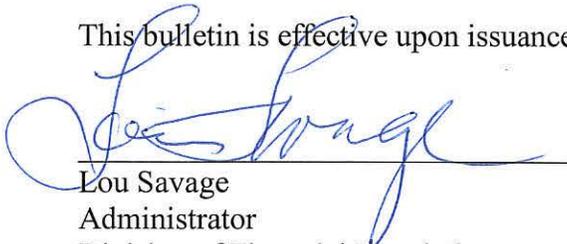
The division encourages its regulated debt buyers and collection agencies to take active measures to provide help to debtors affected by the outbreak. Regulated entities should:

- Be willing to accommodate debtors who have stated that they have hardships resulting from the outbreak, such as reduced income, reduced hours, lost employment, or illness.
- Offer payment accommodations, such as allowing a debtor to defer payments, extending payment due dates, or otherwise adjusting terms of existing payment plans.
- Waive late payment fees or online payment fees.
- Waive nonsufficient funds fees or reduce them to match out-of-pocket costs.
- Temporarily suspend collection activities for debtors who have significant financial or medical hardship.

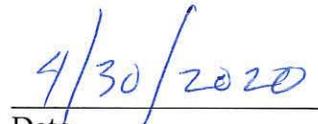
- If you suspend activity on one account of a debtor, suspend activity on all accounts of that debtor.
- Stop collection activity against debtors with no access to assets whose only source of income is an exempt source, such as Social Security.
- A debtor may decide to pay the debt with economic impact payments from the stimulus funds, but Gov. Kate Brown's executive order prevents creditors and debt collectors from garnishing a debtor's CARES Act recovery rebate payment.

The division considers the above measures to be in the public interest. This bulletin applies to debt buyers required to be licensed under ORS 646A.640 to 646A.692 and collection agencies required to be registered under ORS 697.005 to 697.095.

This bulletin is effective upon issuance.



Lou Savage
Administrator
Division of Financial Regulation



Date