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ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN SUES TWO CHICAGO MODELING AGENCIES

Defendants Allegedly Charge Unlawful Payments, Fail to Secure Modeling Jobs for Clients

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today filed two lawsuits in Cook County Circuit Court against two Chicago-based modeling agencies as part of “Operation Bottom Dollar,” a nationwide crackdown on job scams with the Federal Trade Commission and Attorneys General from eight additional states.

“Consumers who enlisted the services of these so-called modeling agencies failed to see any return on their considerable investment,” Madigan said. “These agencies have used exceedingly deceptive tactics to con consumers out of hard-earned cash without ever providing the training that they promised or booking modeling jobs.”

Madigan filed suit today against Glamour Model Talent, Inc. and its President John Vuolo, and separately, against Latte Model and Talent Agency, Ltd., and its owner Robert Owczarek. Both modeling agencies are based in Chicago, and, collectively, Madigan’s Consumer Fraud Bureau has received 13 complaints against them.

In the case against Glamour Model Talent, Madigan’s complaint alleges that the agency charges consumers up to \$600 for headshots but fails to secure modeling jobs or even auditions for their clients. The company solicits modeling clients through a variety of print or online ads indicating they need models and actors immediately for television, film and print jobs that could garner up to \$1,500 per day. When consumers set up an initial appointment at the talent agency, the defendants tell consumers they have “the look” for modeling and that the defendants can help secure modeling jobs. The defendants allegedly claim that before they can begin securing modeling jobs, consumers must take a set of “test photos” for approximately \$99. Once that set is developed, the defendants allegedly tell consumers they must have a larger portfolio of headshots taken at for as much as \$500.

The defendants allegedly claim to use the portfolios to solicit jobs through a large client database, including companies such as Sears and The Gap, but when consumers ask which companies the defendants contacted to market their services, the defendants allegedly fail to produce any client names. Further, once the consumers have paid for their portfolios, the defendants often fail to even respond to consumers’ calls and inquiries about modeling jobs or auditions.

The second lawsuit alleges that Latte Model and Talent Agency and Owczarek solicit consumers for talent agent services and sell travel packages for the International Modeling and Talent Association convention. Consumers typically pay \$5,295 per package. For that price, the defendants allegedly promise consumers that they will provide more than 45 hours of training, a professionally-shot photo session, registration services, roundtrip airfare, hotel, transportation and personal career counseling. Madigan’s lawsuit alleges that the defendants fail to provide some of the services promised during the modeling convention, including ground transportation, registration services and training. In other instances, the defendants allegedly failed to refund consumers if they cancelled the trip. In addition, the complaint alleges that when consumers pay for modeling training at the defendants’ Chicago office, the defendants fail to provide the training.

In each lawsuit, Madigan asks the court to prohibit the defendants from engaging in modeling and talent services in Illinois. Madigan’s suits also ask the court to order the defendants to pay restitution for consumers, a civil penalty of \$50,000 and additional penalties of \$50,000 for each violation found to have been committed with the intent to defraud. The lawsuits also ask the court to require the defendants to pay the costs of the investigation and prosecution of the cases.

Assistant Attorney General Janice Parker is handling the cases for Madigan’s Consumer Fraud Bureau.

The other states participating in today's FTC crackdown on job scams include California, Florida, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Ohio, Tennessee and Utah.

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