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MADIGAN FILES LAWSUIT AGAINST SUBURBAN EXPRESS***Attorney General Alleges Transportation Company Engaged in Discrimination, Harassment and Invaded Privacy of Student Customers***

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today filed a lawsuit against a transportation company for discrimination and harassment against customers and their families.

Madigan filed the [lawsuit](#) in federal court in the Northern District of Illinois against Champaign, Ill.-based Suburban Express Inc. and owner Dennis Toeppen, alleging that Toeppen and Suburban Express discriminated against customers on the basis of race, national origin and religion, harassed customers with public shame and ridicule, and intentionally compromised customers' personal information. Suburban Express is a company that provides bus services to students at colleges and universities in Illinois, Iowa and Indiana to the suburban Chicago area and Chicago airports.

According to Madigan's complaint, Toeppen engaged in discrimination against customers, including a December 2017 mass-marketing email to customers that touted bus rides with, "Passengers like you. You won't feel like you're in China when you're on our buses."

Madigan's lawsuit also alleges Suburban Express encourages its employees to avoid certain students who appear not to speak English when distributing coupons for bus services. The lawsuit also alleges Toeppen posted a video mocking students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, complaining that English is not the primary language spoken in one of the undergraduate residence halls offensively imitating an Asian accent.

"Suburban Express and Dennis Toeppen have engaged in illegal discrimination and harassment against college students and their families," Madigan said. "I am asking the court to take immediate action to prevent further harm to people who have been targeted by Suburban Express and its owner, and my lawsuit seeks to shut this company down for good."

According to Madigan's complaint, Toeppen goes to extreme lengths to ban and publicly shame or embarrass customers who have posted negative online reviews, mistakenly tried to use the wrong bus ticket or offended Toeppen in other ways. He responds to negative online reviews by ridiculing and insulting customers, sometimes encouraging potential employers to avoid hiring them or universities not to enroll certain students. Toeppen also publishes web pages attacking individual customers and has published full credit card numbers, bank account numbers and other personal information.

Along with her lawsuit, Madigan also filed a motion for a temporary restraining order asking the court to take immediate action to force the owner of Suburban Express to stop publishing customers' personal financial information, stop harassment toward customers, and stop forcing them to accept unfair contract terms. Her lawsuit seeks to put Suburban Express out of business.

The case is being handled by the Attorney General's Special Litigation Bureau and Civil Rights Bureau. The [Civil Rights Bureau](#) enforces state and federal civil rights laws to prohibit discrimination in Illinois and advocates for legislation to strengthen those laws. Madigan encourages people who want to file a complaint to do so [online](#) or by calling her Civil Rights Hotline at 1-877-581-3692.

Bureau Chief Jeanne Witherspoon and Assistant Attorneys General Thomas Verticchio, Elizabeth Hady and Matthew Chimienti are handling the lawsuit for Madigan's Special Litigation Bureau. Assistant Attorneys General Jeffrey VanDam and Alison Hill are handling the lawsuit for Madigan's Civil Rights Bureau.



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