

Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



STATE OF ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT OF LAW
1275 W. WASHINGTON STREET
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007-2926
WWW.AZAG.GOV

ANNE TITUS HILBY
PRESS SECRETARY
PHONE: (602) 542-8019
CELL PHONE: (602) 725-2200
ANNE.HILBY@AZAG.GOV

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Terry Goddard Sues Tucson Adoption Agency for Fraud

(Phoenix, Ariz. – Nov. 18, 2008) Attorney General Terry Goddard today filed a lawsuit against Commonwealth Adoptions International, Inc. (Commonwealth) in Tucson. Commonwealth allegedly violated the Arizona Consumer Fraud Act when it failed to refund nearly \$215,000 to families after the company shut down earlier this year.

Also named in the suit are Commonwealth President, Marina Mayhew, Director of Operations Dawn Hill and board members Jim Sellers, James Mayhew, Dan Bish and William Hundelang.

“These families made life-changing decisions and gave this company their money and their trust,” Goddard said. “They deserve to be reimbursed, and Commonwealth needs to be held accountable for violating the terms of its agreements.”

According to court documents, Tucson-based Commonwealth engaged in a pattern of misrepresentations and deceptive practices in the sale of domestic and foreign adoption services to families. These practices include inducing families to enter into contracts for adoption services under the pretense that the families would receive certain services in exchange for fees paid to Commonwealth. Instead, Commonwealth pooled fees, using money paid by one set of parents to pay for other families’ adoptions.

When Commonwealth went out of business on July 31, 2008, about two dozen families requested refunds of fees they had paid for services Commonwealth had not provided. These requests reflected the terms of the families’ adoption agreement with Commonwealth which indicated that “[i]n all events, [Commonwealth] reserves the right to terminate the Agreement and withdraw its services at any time... by providing the Parent with a full refund of all fees paid through the date of termination.”

Court documents state that, despite these terms, the defendants refused to reimburse the families, claiming, among other things, that those funds had already been used for other families’ adoptions and that Commonwealth had no money remaining to cover such reimbursements.

Today’s lawsuit seeks to stop the defendants from engaging in these unlawful practices and prohibit them from conducting any future business in Arizona. The suit also asks the defendants

to pay \$10,000 for each violation of the Consumer Fraud Act, provide full restitution to all families who were defrauded and reimburse the State for investigation costs and legal fees. Assistant Attorney General Taren Ellis is handling this case. A copy of the complaint, which was filed in Pima County Superior Court earlier today, is available on the Attorney General's Web site, www.azag.gov.

Consumers who feel they have been the victim of consumer fraud by Commonwealth or any Arizona businesses should contact the Arizona Attorney General's Office Consumer Information and Complaint division in Tucson at (520) 628-6504, in Phoenix at (602) 542-5763 or toll-free outside of Maricopa or Pima County at (800) 352-8431.

For additional information, please contact Anne Hilby at (602) 542-8019.

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