



P.O. Box 10485 Baltimore, MD 21209-0485 • 410-624-8980 • www.marylandconsumers.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kristine Henry
410-624-8981
kristine_henry@mdconsumers.org

Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition urges Attorney General Gansler to investigate unfair arbitration practices

BALTIMORE, MD, July 15, 2009 – The Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition today asked Maryland Attorney General Douglas F. Gansler to investigate the practices of the National Arbitration Forum. The firm was sued yesterday by the Minnesota Attorney General for allegedly using illegal and dishonest practices that harm consumers. The company also operates in Maryland and its practices affect many people in our state, though most are unaware of its existence.

Many credit card companies, retailers, banks, and communication companies insert into the fine print of their agreements “mandatory pre-dispute arbitration clauses,” whereby consumers waive their right to have their day in court if a dispute arises. Instead, typically without knowing it, the consumer agrees that any dispute will be resolved by an arbitration forum selected by the credit card company or other creditor. Increasingly, credit card companies, banks and others are choosing to require that consumers arbitrate disputes through the National Arbitration Forum, which allegedly stacks the deck against the consumer.

The letter to Attorney General Gansler states, in part, “MCRC asks that you use your good offices to protect Maryland consumers from unfair, deceptive and illegal arbitration practices. This is an issue that most Marylanders are not aware of, but which has a significant impact on nearly every resident of our state because it touches nearly everyone who uses a credit card, signs a cell phone contract or opens a bank account.”

A copy of the full letter that MCRC sent to the Attorney General, as well as other sources of information about mandatory arbitration, can be found on our website at www.marylandconsumers.org.

Founded in 2000, MCRC is a non-profit organization focused on fairness and safety in the marketplace. MCRC seeks to advance and protect the interests of Maryland consumers through research, education and advocacy. Our members include individuals and organizations that support the interests of consumers.