

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
EASTERN DIVISION**

LAURA E. KEELING,	)	
	)	
PLAINTIFF,	)	
	)	
v.	)	Case No. 22-cv-4948
	)	
	)	
COLLECTION PROFESSIONALS, INC.,	)	<u>Judge Franklin U. Valderrama</u>
ROBERT B. STEELE, and APLINGTON,	)	
KAUFMAN, McCLINTOCK, STEELE	)	Magistrate Jeannice W. Appenteng
& BARRY, LTD.,	)	
	)	
DEFENDANTS.	)	

PRELIMINARY APPROVAL ORDER

The Court, having considered the parties’ Joint Motion for Preliminary Approval, hereby grants preliminary approval to the Class Settlement Agreement ("Agreement") between Laura E. Keeling ("Plaintiff"), individually and as representative of the class of persons defined below ("Class"), and Defendants Collection Professionals, Inc. (“CP”), Robert B. Steele (“Steele”) and Aplington, Kaufman, McClintock, Steele & Barry, Ltd. (“Aplington”) (collectively, “Defendants”) as follows:

1. The Court hereby preliminarily approves the Agreement and the settlement embodied therein. The Court preliminarily finds that this case meets the requirements for class certification under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23. The Court adopts the definitions in the Agreement herein. The terms of the Agreement are reasonable, fair and hereby approved by the Court, subject to the final fairness hearing described below.

2. The parties agree to seek certification of the following Class for settlement purposes only:

The Class consists of (a) all persons in Bureau County, Illinois, (b) against which a lawsuit was filed by Steele and/or Aplington, on behalf of CP (c) where Steele and/or Aplington engaged in an initial communication in connection with the collection of a debt with a person (or their attorney) who was a defendant in an action filed on behalf of CP, with respect to the obligation being sought in said action (d) during the time period that begins on September 13, 2021 and ends on September 13, 2022.

Excluded from the Class are (1) unknown trustees (2) unknown heirs of deceased individuals, and (3) corporate entities including corporations, limited liability corporations, limited partnerships and associations.

Defendants have identified approximately 215 potential people in the Class, including the named Plaintiff.

3. For purposes of effectuating this settlement, the Court hereby conditionally appoints Plaintiff Laura Keeling as class representative for the Class, and appoints Mario Kasalo of The Law Office of M. Kris Kasalo, Ltd, as Class Counsel.

4. The Court approves the parties' proposed Class Notice and directs it to be mailed to the last known address of the class members as shown on Defendant's records on or before September 22, 2026 ("Notice Deadline"). Class Counsel will have the notice sent by any form of U.S. Mail providing forwarding addresses.

5. The Court finds that mailing of the Class Notice (Exhibit 1 to the Agreement) is the only notice required and that such notice satisfies the requirements of due process and Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23(c)(2)(B).

6. The Court appoints Analytics LLC as Class Administrator. Responsibilities of the Class Administrator shall include the following: (a) disseminating information, including Class Notice, to Settlement Class Members concerning settlement procedures in the manner provided in the Agreement; (b) receiving opt-out forms and documentation; (c) paying claims as provided in the Agreement and pursuant to any applicable orders of this Court.

7. Class members have until November 23, 2026, or the first business day after the 60th day after the initial mailing of the class notice on September 22, 2026, to exclude themselves from or object to the proposed settlement. Any class members desiring to exclude themselves from the action must serve their request for exclusion on counsel for both Plaintiff and the Defendants by that date. Any class members who wish to object to the settlement must submit an objection in writing to the Clerk of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois and serve copies of the objection on counsel for both Plaintiff and Defendant by that date. Any objection must include the Class members' full name, address, phone number, number of the case, the objection to the settlement, set forth the legal and factual basis for why the objector believes that the Court should find that the proposed settlement is not in the best interests of the Class, and provide copies of any documents in support of the objection. Objectors who have filed written objections to the settlement may also appear at the fairness hearing and be heard on the fairness of the settlement. To be effective, the request for exclusion or objection must be postmarked no later than November 23, 2026.

8. A final hearing on the fairness and reasonableness of the Agreement and whether final approval shall be given to it will be held on January 13, 2027 at 9:30 a.m.

ENTERED:

Dated: July 27, 2026

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Franklin U. Valderrama", written over a horizontal line.

United States District Judge
Franklin U. Valderrama