

OCCC CASE NO. L19-00268

IN THE MATTER OF:	§	BEFORE THE
	§	
MASTER FILE NO. 1700058534	§	OFFICE OF CONSUMER
ARETE FREEDOM LLC	§	
5772 BOLSA AVE., SUITE 220	§	CREDIT COMMISSIONER
HUNTINGTON BEACH,	§	
CALIFORNIA 92649	§	STATE OF TEXAS

**ORDER TO FILE TIMELY AND ACCURATE  
ANNUAL REPORTS AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTS**

The Office of Consumer Credit Commissioner (“OCCC”) issues this Order to File Timely and Accurate Annual Reports and Required Documents against Arete Freedom LLC (“Arete Freedom”).<sup>1</sup>

**Statement of Facts and Law**

Arete Freedom is a debt management services provider, registered with the OCCC under Chapter 394 of the Texas Finance Code. Arete Freedom operates under master file number 1700058534 at one location, under registration number 210435. Arete Freedom’s Compliance Officer is Ruddy Palacios, and its designated contact address is 5772 Bolsa Ave., Suite 220, Huntington Beach, California 92649.

A debt management services provider must file annual reports with the Consumer Credit Commissioner (“Commissioner”).<sup>2</sup> Additionally, a debt management services provider must annually file the following documents with the Commissioner:

- (a) a blank copy of the agreement described in Texas Finance Code § 394.209 (written debt management services agreement);<sup>3</sup>
- (b) blank copies of the written information required in Texas Finance Code § 394.208(a)(5) (consumer counseling statement);<sup>4</sup>
- (c) a surety bond or evidence that it maintains an insurance policy;<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tex. Fin. Code § 14.208(a).

<sup>2</sup> Tex. Fin. Code § 394.205(b); 7 Tex. Admin. Code § 88.202(b).

<sup>3</sup> Tex. Fin. Code § 394.205(d); 7 Tex. Admin. Code § 88.202(b)(1).

<sup>4</sup> Tex. Fin. Code § 394.205(d); 7 Tex. Admin. Code § 88.202(b)(1).

- (d) a list of all owners and principal parties, including any change in ownership that occurred during the preceding calendar year;<sup>6</sup> and
- (e) information regarding its credit counselors, including the number of credit counselors employed at the time the annual report is prepared, and the accreditation organization or program that certifies its counselors.<sup>7</sup>

The annual report and required documents are due on or before February 1 of each year.<sup>8</sup> The provider must comply with all instructions from the Commissioner relating to submitting the report.<sup>9</sup>

Arete Freedom did not file its 2018 annual report with the Commissioner on or before February 1, 2019. Further, Arete Freedom did not file all of the required documents described above in items (a) through (e) on or before February 1, 2019.

### **Authority**

The Commissioner may issue an injunction ordering a debt management services provider to file one or more complete, accurate, and timely annual reports and required annual documents if the Commissioner has reasonable cause to believe that the provider is violating Chapter 394 of the Texas Finance Code.<sup>10</sup>

The Commissioner has reasonable cause to believe that Arete Freedom is violating Chapter 394 of the Texas Finance Code, and therefore issues this Order, because Arete Freedom failed to timely file its 2018 annual report and required documents.

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<sup>5</sup> Tex. Fin. Code § 394.206; 7 Tex. Admin. Code § 88.202(c).

<sup>6</sup> 7 Tex. Admin. Code § 88.202(b)(2).

<sup>7</sup> 7 Tex. Admin. Code § 88.202(b)(3).

<sup>8</sup> 7 Tex. Admin. Code § 88.201.

<sup>9</sup> 7 Tex. Admin. Code § 88.202(a); <https://occc.texas.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/reports/annual-report-how-do-i-file-a-report.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Tex. Fin. Code § 14.208.

## Order

IT IS ORDERED that Arete Freedom LLC:

- (1) comply with the reporting requirements set forth in Section 394.205 of the Texas Finance Code and Title 7, Sections 88.201 and 88.202 of the Texas Administrative Code;
- (2) comply with the filing requirements of Section 394.206 of the Texas Finance Code and Title 7, Sections 88.201 and 88.202 of the Texas Administrative Code;
- (3) file its 2018 annual report within 30 days of service of this Order, if it has not already done so;
- (4) file the following required documents within 30 days of service of this Order, if it has not already done so:
  - a. a blank copy of the agreement described in Texas Finance Code § 394.209 (written debt management services agreement);
  - b. blank copies of the written information required in Texas Finance Code § 394.208(a)(5) (consumer counseling statement);
  - c. a surety bond or evidence that it maintains an insurance policy;
  - d. a list of all owners and principal parties, including any change in ownership that occurred during the preceding calendar year; and
  - e. information regarding its credit counselors, including the number of credit counselors employed at the time the annual report is prepares, and the accreditation organization or program that certifies its counselors; and
- (5) timely file complete and accurate future annual reports and required documents.

Annual reports for debt management services providers must be submitted through the OCCC's Application Licensing Examination Compliance System (ALECS): [alecs.occc.texas.gov](http://alecs.occc.texas.gov). Instructions are available by clicking the "File Annual Report" button on the OCCC's home page, [occc.texas.gov](http://occc.texas.gov).

The required documents described above must be submitted by email to [annualreport@occc.texas.gov](mailto:annualreport@occc.texas.gov).

## **Violation of Order**

If you violate this Order, the OCCC may impose an administrative penalty of up to \$1,000 per day.<sup>11</sup> Multiple violations may also result in the suspension or revocation of your registration.<sup>12</sup>

## **Right to Request Hearing**

You have the right to request a hearing regarding this Order.<sup>13</sup> Your request must be made in writing and sent to the OCCC not later than 30 days after you receive this Order. You must send your request to:

Michael Rigby  
Office of Consumer Credit Commissioner  
2601 N. Lamar Blvd.  
Austin, Texas 78705

If you request a hearing, a hearing on this matter will be set and conducted in accordance with Chapter 2001 of the Texas Government Code.<sup>14</sup> If you fail to request a hearing by this deadline, this Order is considered final and enforceable.<sup>15</sup>

All communications with the OCCC concerning this matter must be through Michael Rigby, General Counsel, who may be contacted by mail at 2601 N. Lamar Blvd., Austin, Texas 78705, by telephone at (512) 936-7623, or by email to michael.rigby@occc.texas.gov.

Signed this 26th day of June, 2019.

/s/ Leslie L. Pettijohn  
Leslie L. Pettijohn  
Consumer Credit Commissioner  
State of Texas

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<sup>11</sup> Tex. Fin. Code § 14.208(c).

<sup>12</sup> Tex. Fin. Code § 394.204(k).

<sup>13</sup> Tex. Fin. Code § 14.208(b).

<sup>14</sup> Tex. Fin. Code § 14.208(b).

<sup>15</sup> Tex. Fin. Code § 14.208(c).

## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that on June 26, 2019, a true and correct copy of this Order to File Timely and Accurate Annual Reports and Required Documents has been sent to Arete Freedom LLC by regular mail and certified mail, return receipt requested, at:

CMRRR #91 7199 9991 7037 5165 2671

Arete Freedom LLC

Attn: Ruddy Palacios, Compliance Officer

5772 Bolsa Ave., Suite 220

Huntington Beach, CA 92649

CMRRR #91 7199 9991 7037 5165 2688

Arete Freedom LLC

Attn: Ruddy Palacios, Registered Agent

4702 Old Spanish Trail,

Houston, TX 77021

/s/Michael Rigby\_\_\_\_\_

Michael Rigby

General Counsel

Office of Consumer Credit Commissioner

State Bar No. 50511925

2601 North Lamar Blvd.

Austin, Texas 78705

(512) 936-7623

(512) 936-7610 (fax)

michael.rigby@occc.texas.gov