



March 17, 2026

The Honorable Scott Oelslager  
Chair  
House Committee on Financial Institutions  
Ohio House of Representatives  
77 South High Street, 21st Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

**Re: Ohio HB 534 Relating to Debt Resolution Services**

Dear Representative Oelslager,

The National Consumer Law Center<sup>1</sup> and the American Financial Services Association<sup>2</sup> do not agree on everything, but we agree on this: HB 534 should not pass as written. Many companies offering debt resolution services do more harm than good, and HB 534 would enable rapid proliferation of these kinds of companies and their services in Ohio, displacing legitimate not-for-profit debt counselors in the process.

There are three hallmarks of bad actors in the debt settlement industry:

- 1) They tell consumers who are current on their account(s) to stop paying their bills. They do this on the theory that it will bring creditors to the table. But in the meantime, if a consumer becomes delinquent when he or she was not, their credit score plummets.
- 2) They tell consumers to cut off communication with their creditors. Creditors will talk to their customers for free. Creditors are inherently incentivized to work out payment plans and other compromises with their customers if they are in financial distress.
- 3) They have a financial interest in the settlement itself. In recent years, the debt resolution industry has increasingly begun to promote debt consolidation loans to consumers.

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<sup>1</sup> Since 1969, the nonprofit [National Consumer Law Center](http://www.nclc.org)® (NCLC®) has worked for consumer justice and economic security for low-income and other disadvantaged people in the U.S. through its expertise in policy analysis and advocacy, publications, litigation, expert witness services, and training. [www.nclc.org](http://www.nclc.org)

<sup>2</sup> Founded in 1916, the American Financial Services Association (AFSA), based in Washington, D.C., is the primary trade association for the consumer credit industry, protecting access to credit and consumer choice. AFSA members provide consumers with many kinds of credit, including direct and indirect vehicle financing, traditional installment loans, mortgages, payment cards, and retail sales finance. AFSA members do not provide payday or vehicle title loans.



Sometimes they do so as a bait-and-switch—they advertise non-existent loan programs via direct mail or lead generation sites. Then, when consumers call, they're told they do not qualify for a loan, but they do qualify for debt settlement. Other times, the debt settlement company brokers loan to its own customers. The loans are either made by an affiliate or a lender that pays a referral fee. This is a gross conflict of interest because they are presenting themselves as a lifeline to consumers to get them out of debt. A debt settlement company should never have a financial interest in a subsequent loan.

Alarming, there is also evidence that consumers are increasingly targeted by debt settlement companies immediately after borrowing money, before any payments are made. This demonstrates two things. First, that the consumer had good credit and was a reasonable credit risk when the loan was underwritten and second, that the debt settlement company is using the pretense of helping consumers as a way to acquire new customers. This growing practice is sure to be invigorated under the permissive environment that would result from HB 534.

We respectfully request the committee review our concerns and reject or radically modify HB 534. We very much appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on this important issue and are available to answer any questions you may have at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Andrew Pizor  
Senior Attorney  
National Consumer Law Center

Danielle Fagre Arlowe  
Senior Vice President  
American Financial Services Association

CC: Members of the House Financial Institutions Committee