

United Way of Monterey County and United Way of CA

Overview of Consumer Rights

Know your consumer rights regarding credit

Here is a sample bill of consumer rights for individuals using credit based on U.S. laws and regulations:

A. Right to fair and accurate credit reporting

- You have the right to receive a free copy of your credit report from each of the three major nationwide credit reporting agencies (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion) annually.
- You have the right to know what information is in your credit report.
- You have the right to dispute inaccurate or incomplete information in your credit report with the credit reporting company and the company that provided the information. These entities must investigate your dispute free of charge.
- If your credit is denied or unfavorable terms are offered based on information in your credit report, the creditor must inform you and provide the name, address, and phone number of the credit reporting agency.
- Negative information generally cannot be reported on your credit report for more than seven years, and bankruptcies cannot be reported for more than 10 years.
- You can place a fraud alert or security freeze on your credit report to help prevent identity theft.

B. Right to fair lending practices

- You cannot be discriminated against in credit decisions based on your race, sex, marital status, religion, national origin, age, or receipt of public assistance.
- You have the right to have reliable public assistance considered in the same manner as other income.
- If you are denied credit, you have a legal right to know why.
- In most cases, a consumer reporting agency may not report negative information that is more than seven years old, or bankruptcies that are more than 10 years old.

C. Right to accurate billing and credit card practice

- You have the right to dispute billing errors on your credit card statement and credit report.
- The Fair Credit Billing Act (FCBA) allows you to dispute errors like unauthorized charges, incorrect amounts, or goods/services not delivered as agreed.
- Credit cards companies must investigate billing complaints within a specified timeframe and provide cardholders with certain protections in billing disputes.

D. Right to protection from unfair debt collection practices

- You have the right to be free from abusive, unfair, or deceptive debt collection practices.
- Debt collectors cannot harass, threaten, or use profane language.
- They cannot call you before 8 a.m. or after 9 p.m. without your consent.
- You have the right to request proof of the debt and dispute it.
- Debt collectors cannot threaten to illegally harm you or your property or lie about the amount you owe.

E. Right to address identity theft

- If your identity is stolen, you have the right to create an FTC Identity Theft Report and place fraud alerts or security freezes on your credit report.
- You can have fraudulent information removed or blocked from your credit report
- You have limited liability for fraudulent debts caused by identity thefts.