

Contact: Edie Ousley
Florida Chamber of Commerce
Phone: (850) 521-1231
Cell: (850) 251-6261
eousley@flchamber.com
www.FloridaChamber.com



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Partner List:

Florida Chamber of Commerce

Florida Roofing & Sheet Metal Contractors Association

National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies

Personal Insurance Federation of Florida

Property Casualty Insurers Association of America

Safelite Group Inc.

Citizens Property Insurance Corporation

Florida Property and Casualty Association

Florida Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Contractors Association

Consumer Federation of the Southeast

Associated Builders and Contractors

Florida Justice Reform Institute

Florida Realtors

Florida Bankers Association

Florida Retail Federation

Latin American Association of Insurance Agencies

Council of Property Claims Professionals

Florida Insurance Council

Florida Association of Insurance Agents

Professional Insurance Agents of Florida

Steve Burgess, Former State Insurance

Consumer Protection Coalition Releases Videos of Victims of AOB Abuse

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (Feb. 27, 2018) – The Consumer Protection Coalition today released video testimonials of real consumers who have been victimized by Assignment of Benefits (AOB) abuse and who urge lawmakers to take action this legislative session to prevent AOB abuse from harming others.

The videos highlight the stories of Darleen Masturzo of Polk County and Charles and Wendy Snellgrove of Pinellas County, who signed AOB contracts after discovering water leaks in their kitchens and were left powerless when home repair vendors charged their insurance companies for excessive, unnecessary work.

“I basically signed my life away,” Ms. Masturzo said. “I felt so betrayed.”

Coalition members say the videos should send a powerful message to lawmakers that Assignment of Benefits abuse is hurting Floridians and must be stopped.

“For anyone who doesn’t believe AOB abuse is causing hardship and stress for consumers, these videos should change their mind,” said Edie Ousley, vice president of public affairs for the Florida Chamber of Commerce, which spearheads the Consumer Protection Coalition (CPC). “Senators often say they want to hear from real consumers on these issues – here they are. These videos show first-hand that AOB abuse is turning people’s lives upside down and should not be allowed to continue. Consumers who sign an AOB should not sign their life away but, unfortunately, that is today’s reality.”

Below are summaries and a link to their stories.

<http://www.fightfraud.today/resources.html>

Darleen Masturzo of Davenport, FL:

After a pipe burst in the kitchen of her mobile home park, Ms. Masturzo called a restoration company that said she had water damage and a mold problem. She signed an AOB to start work and, within hours, most of her

house was blocked off in plastic, her kitchen was torn up and she had to find another place to live. The company billed her insurance company \$28,000 for the repair work – even though the policy on her entire home was worth just \$35,000. She was out of her house for six months before repairs were finally done.

Charles and Wendy Snellgrove of Clearwater, FL:

After noticing water on the floor of their kitchen on Jan. 30, 2017, the Snellgroves called a plumber who said they had a severe mold problem and needed to hire a remediation company. At the urging of the vendor, they signed an AOB, and crews immediately removed her kitchen cabinets and countertops. The repair vendors ended up finding no mold but billed their insurance company \$26,000 for work that the insurer estimated at \$11,000. The couple tried to rescind the AOB and filed a lawsuit against the contractor alleging he caused the damage. Soon after, the contractors countersued for breach of contract. More than a year later, their kitchen is still torn up.

The CPC urges the Senate to take up House Bill 7015 by Rep. Jay Trumbull that the full House passed during the first week of session in January. It allows policyholders to rescind an AOB contract without any penalty or fee and requires cost estimates for work and notices that a vendor intends to file a lawsuit against an insurer. It also modifies one-way attorney fee rules in order to eliminate incentives for filing unwarranted lawsuits when insurance companies balk at inflated claims.

“Floridians need to understand the risk they face with the continuation of Assignment of Benefits abuse,” said Liz Reynolds, Southeast regional vice president for the National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies. “Our hope is that these videos not only get their attention but drive home the seriousness of the situation. This has been going on for too long, and it is time the Legislature does something about it.”

###

The Consumer Protection Coalition is a broad-based group of business leaders, consumer advocates, real estate agents, construction contractors, insurance agents and insurance trade groups pushing for reforms to end Assignment of Benefits (AOB) abuse. Learn more about the Coalition at www.FightFraud.Today, follow the Coalition on Twitter [@CPC_FL](https://twitter.com/CPC_FL) and “like” our page at [FB.com/consumerprotectioncoalition](https://www.facebook.com/consumerprotectioncoalition).