

537.5108 Unconscionability — inducement by unconscionable conduct — unconscionable debt collection.

1. With respect to a transaction that is, gives rise to, or leads the debtor to believe it will give rise to a consumer credit transaction, in an action other than a class action, if the court as a matter of law finds the agreement or transaction to have been unconscionable at the time it was made, or to have been induced by unconscionable conduct, the court may refuse to enforce the agreement, or if the court finds any term or part of the agreement or transaction to have been unconscionable at the time it was made, the court may refuse to enforce the agreement, or may enforce the remainder of the agreement without the unconscionable term or part, or may so limit the application of any unconscionable term or part as to avoid any unconscionable result.

2. With respect to a consumer credit transaction, or a transaction which would have been a consumer credit transaction if a finance charge was made or the obligation was payable in installments, if the court as a matter of law finds in an action other than a class action, that a person has engaged in, is engaging in, or is likely to engage in unconscionable conduct in collecting a debt arising from that transaction, the court may grant an injunction and award the consumer any actual damages the consumer sustained.

3. If it is claimed or appears to the court that the agreement or transaction or any term or part of it may be unconscionable, or that a person has engaged in, is engaging in, or is likely to engage in unconscionable conduct in collecting a debt, the parties shall be afforded a reasonable opportunity to present evidence as to the setting, purpose, and effect of the agreement or transaction or term or part thereof, or of the conduct, to aid the court in making the determination.

4. In applying subsection 1, consideration shall be given to each of the following factors, among others, as applicable:

a. Belief by the seller, lessor, or lender at the time a transaction is entered into that there is no reasonable probability of payment in full of the obligation by the consumer or debtor. However, the rental renewals necessary to acquire ownership in a consumer rental purchase agreement shall not be construed to be the obligation contemplated in this subsection if the consumer may terminate the agreement without penalty at any time. As used in this paragraph, “*obligation*” means the initial periodic lease payments and any other additional advance payments required at the consummation of the transaction.

b. In the case of a consumer credit sale, consumer lease, or consumer rental purchase agreement, knowledge by the seller or lessor at the time of the sale or lease of the inability of the consumer to receive substantial benefits from the property or services sold or leased.

c. In the case of a consumer credit sale, consumer lease, or consumer rental purchase agreement, gross disparity between the price of the property or services sold or leased and the value of the property or services measured by the price at which similar property or services are readily obtainable in consumer credit transactions by like consumers.

d. The fact that the creditor contracted for or received separate charges for insurance with respect to a consumer credit sale or consumer loan with the effect of making the sale or loan, considered as a whole, unconscionable.

e. The fact that the seller, lessor or lender has knowingly taken advantage of the inability of the consumer or debtor reasonably to protect the consumer’s or debtor’s interests by reason of physical or mental infirmities, ignorance, illiteracy or inability to understand the language of the agreement, or similar factors.

f. The fact that the seller, lessor or lender has engaged in conduct with knowledge or reason to know that like conduct has been restrained or enjoined by a court in a civil action by the administrator against any person pursuant to the provisions on injunctions against fraudulent or unconscionable agreements or conduct in section 537.6111.

5. In applying subsection 2, violations of section 537.7103 shall be considered, among other factors, as applicable.

6. If in an action in which unconscionability is claimed the court finds unconscionability pursuant to subsection 1 or 2, the court shall award reasonable fees to the attorney for the consumer or debtor. If the court does not find unconscionability and the consumer or debtor claiming unconscionability has brought or maintained an action the consumer or debtor knew

to be groundless, the court shall award reasonable fees to the attorney for the party against whom the claim is made. Reasonable attorney's fees shall be determined by the value of the time reasonably expended by the attorney on the unconscionability issue and not by the amount of the recovery on behalf of the prevailing party.

7. The remedies of this section are in addition to remedies otherwise available for the same conduct under law other than this chapter, but no double recovery of actual damages may be had.

8. For the purpose of this section, a charge or practice expressly permitted by this chapter is not in itself unconscionable.

[C75, 77, 79, 81, §537.5108]

87 Acts, ch 80, §45 – 47

Referred to in §537.3617, 537.6111