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Attorney General Ashley Moody News Release

Attorney General Moody Secures Agreement to Permanently Ban Roomster and Owners from Using Deceptive Reviews



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody secured an agreement banning Roomster and its owners from purchasing consumer reviews to promote the business. Attorney General Moody, the Federal Trade Commission and five other states brought an action against Roomster Corp. and its owners, John Shriber and Roman Zaks, for allegedly buying fake consumer reviews. Under the stipulated order filed with the court, Roomster and its owners will be permanently banned from buying or incentivizing any consumer review. The order also requires Roomster, Shriber and Zaks to pay the states \$1.6 million for consumer restitution.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “My office investigated allegations that this company saturated the internet with tens of thousands of fake positive reviews to dupe consumers into paying for access to rental housing information that is unverified and, in many instances, involves information for rentals that do not exist. We took action with the FTC and our state partners, and obtained an agreement that will permanently ban Roomster and its owners from purchasing reviews and using the fake reviews or other false information to conduct business.”

In August 2022, Attorney General Moody’s Consumer Protection Division took legal action against Roomster and its owners for allegedly, either directly or through affiliate marketers, using phony listings and fake reviews on sites such as Craigslist to drive consumers to Roomster’s

platform where consumers paid fees to Roomster only to discover the rental listings did not exist. According to the complaint, Roomster allegedly saturated the internet with tens of thousands of four- and five-star fake reviews purchased from Jonathan Martinez, doing business as AppWinn. Martinez is already subject to a stipulated permanent injunction and monetary judgment entered by the court.

The agreement and proposed order being submitted to the court for entry will permanently ban Roomster, Shriber, and Zaks from paying or otherwise providing incentives for any consumer review, and from using or disseminating any review where there is a relationship with the reviewer that might affect the review's weight or credibility. Roomster, Shriber and Zaks will also be banned from misrepresenting that any rental listing is verified, authentic or available; or any other material fact.

The order also requires Roomster and its owners to monitor affiliate marketers by routinely reviewing marketing materials without notice; investigating consumer complaints about affiliates; providing refunds to consumers impacted by affiliate conduct that violated the order; and halting payments and terminating affiliates who pose as consumers or misrepresent their status in other ways.

Stipulated final orders have the force of law when approved and signed by the District Court Judge. The proposed stipulated final order is filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

Florida is joined by the FTC and the following states in the action: California, Colorado, Illinois, Massachusetts and New York.

To view the complaint, click [here](#).

To view the stipulated order against Martinez, click [here](#).

To view the proposed stipulated order against Roomster Corp., John Shriber, and Roman Zaks, click [here](#).

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