



[BILLING CODE: 6750-01S]

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

[File No. 182 3180]

LendEDU; Analysis to Aid Public Comment

AGENCY: Federal Trade Commission.

ACTION: Proposed Consent Agreement; Request for Comment.

SUMMARY: The consent agreement in this matter settles alleged violations of federal law prohibiting unfair or deceptive acts or practices. The attached Analysis to Aid Public Comment describes both the allegations in the complaint and the terms of the consent order – embodied in the consent agreement – that would settle these allegations.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*].

ADDRESSES: Interested parties may file comments online or on paper, by following the instructions in the Request for Comment part of the **SUPPLEMENTARY**

INFORMATION section below. Write “LendEDU; File No. 182 3180” on your comment, and file your comment online at <https://www.regulations.gov> by following the instructions on the web-based form. If you prefer to file your comment on paper, mail your comment to the following address: Federal Trade Commission, Office of the Secretary, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite CC-5610 (Annex D), Washington, DC 20580, or deliver your comment to the following address: Federal Trade Commission, Office of the Secretary, Constitution Center, 400 7th Street SW, 5th Floor, Suite 5610 (Annex D), Washington, DC 20024.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas Widor (202-326-3039),

Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20580.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Pursuant to Section 6(f) of the Federal Trade Commission Act, 15 U.S.C. 46(f), and FTC Rule 2.34, 16 CFR § 2.34, notice is hereby given that the above-captioned consent agreement containing a consent order to cease and desist, having been filed with and accepted, subject to final approval, by the Commission, has been placed on the public record for a period of thirty (30) days. The following Analysis to Aid Public Comment describes the terms of the consent agreement and the allegations in the complaint. An electronic copy of the full text of the consent agreement package can be obtained from the FTC Website (for February 3, 2020), at this web address: <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/commission-actions>.

You can file a comment online or on paper. For the Commission to consider your comment, we must receive it on or before [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*]. Write “LendEDU; File No. 182 3180” on your comment. Your comment—including your name and your state—will be placed on the public record of this proceeding, including, to the extent practicable, on the <https://www.regulations.gov> website.

Postal mail addressed to the Commission is subject to delay due to heightened security screening. As a result, we encourage you to submit your comments online through the <https://www.regulations.gov> website.

If you prefer to file your comment on paper, write “LendEDU; File No. 182 3180” on your comment and on the envelope, and mail your comment to the following address: Federal Trade Commission, Office of the Secretary, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue

NW, Suite CC-5610 (Annex D), Washington, DC 20580; or deliver your comment to the following address: Federal Trade Commission, Office of the Secretary, Constitution Center, 400 7th Street SW, 5th Floor, Suite 5610 (Annex D), Washington, DC 20024. If possible, submit your paper comment to the Commission by courier or overnight service.

Because your comment will be placed on the publicly accessible website at <https://www.regulations.gov>, you are solely responsible for making sure that your comment does not include any sensitive or confidential information. In particular, your comment should not include any sensitive personal information, such as your or anyone else's Social Security number; date of birth; driver's license number or other state identification number, or foreign country equivalent; passport number; financial account number; or credit or debit card number. You are also solely responsible for making sure that your comment does not include any sensitive health information, such as medical records or other individually identifiable health information. In addition, your comment should not include any "trade secret or any commercial or financial information which . . . is privileged or confidential" – as provided by Section 6(f) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. 46(f), and FTC Rule 4.10(a)(2), 16 CFR 4.10(a)(2) – including in particular competitively sensitive information such as costs, sales statistics, inventories, formulas, patterns, devices, manufacturing processes, or customer names.

Comments containing material for which confidential treatment is requested must be filed in paper form, must be clearly labeled "Confidential," and must comply with FTC Rule 4.9(c). In particular, the written request for confidential treatment that accompanies the comment must include the factual and legal basis for the request, and must identify the specific portions of the comment to be withheld from the public record.

See FTC Rule 4.9(c). Your comment will be kept confidential only if the General Counsel grants your request in accordance with the law and the public interest. Once your comment has been posted on the public FTC Website – as legally required by FTC Rule 4.9(b) – we cannot redact or remove your comment from the FTC Website, unless you submit a confidentiality request that meets the requirements for such treatment under FTC Rule 4.9(c), and the General Counsel grants that request.

Visit the FTC Website at <http://www.ftc.gov> to read this Notice and the news release describing it. The FTC Act and other laws that the Commission administers permit the collection of public comments to consider and use in this proceeding, as appropriate. The Commission will consider all timely and responsive public comments that it receives on or before [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*]. For information on the Commission’s privacy policy, including routine uses permitted by the Privacy Act, see <https://www.ftc.gov/site-information/privacy-policy>.

Analysis of Proposed Consent Order to Aid Public Comment

The Federal Trade Commission (“Commission”) has accepted, subject to final approval, an agreement containing a consent order from Shop Tutors Inc., d/b/a LendEDU (“LendEDU” or “the Company”); its co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, Nathaniel Matherson; its co-founder and Chief Technology Officer, Matthew Lenhard; and the Vice President of Product, Alexander Coleman (collectively, “Proposed Respondents”).

The proposed consent order has been placed on the public record for thirty (30) days for receipt of comments by interested persons. Comments received during this

period will become part of the public record. After thirty (30) days, the Commission will again review the agreement and the comments received, and will decide whether it should withdraw from the agreement and take appropriate action or make final the agreement's proposed order.

Since 2014, Respondents have operated the website www.lendedu.com, which they promote as a resource for consumers in search of financial products such as loans and insurance. In numerous instances, Respondents have described the content on the website, including their rate tables, star ratings, and rankings of the companies offering these financial products, as "objective," "honest," "accurate," and "unbiased." Contrary to their claims, Respondents have provided financial services companies with higher numerical rankings or star ratings and higher positions on rate tables based on compensation. Respondents also have added or removed companies from their content based on compensation.

In addition, Respondents have touted positive consumer reviews about their company and website that, in fact, were written by LendEDU employees or their friends, family members, and associates. Of 126 reviews of LendEDU on the third-party review platform Trustpilot, 90% were written or made up by LendEDU employees or their family, friends, or other associates. Respondents also have reposted and touted the Trustpilot reviews on LendEDU's website, as well as fake reviews written by LendEDU employees who purport to be, but are not, actual users.

The proposed order will prevent Proposed Respondents from engaging in similar acts or practices. Part I would prohibit Proposed Respondents from making the challenged and related misrepresentations. Part II would require Proposed Respondents to

disclose the influence of compensation on representations made on its website and to disclose material connections among the Proposed Respondents and the various parties represented on the website. Part III would require Proposed Respondents, jointly and severally, to pay to the Commission \$350,000 within 8 days of the effective date of the Order.

Part IV sets out additional requirements related to the monetary relief. Part V requires Proposed Respondents to provide sufficient customer information to enable the Commission to efficiently administer consumer redress. Part VI is an order distribution provision that requires Proposed Respondents to provide the order to current and future principals, officers, directors, and LLC managers and members, as well as current and future managers, agents and representatives who participate in certain duties related to the subject matter of the proposed complaint and order, and to secure statements acknowledging receipt of the order. Part VII requires Proposed Respondents to submit a compliance report one year after the order is entered. It also requires Proposed Respondents to notify the Commission of corporate changes that may affect compliance obligations within 14 days of such a change.

Part VIII requires Proposed Respondents to maintain and upon request make available certain compliance-related records, including accounting records and unique websites. Part IX requires Proposed Respondents to submit additional compliance reports within 10 business days of a written request by the Commission. Part X is a provision “sunsetting” the order after twenty (20) years, with certain exceptions.

The purpose of this analysis is to aid public comment on the proposed order. It is not intended to constitute an official interpretation of the complaint or proposed order, or to modify in any way the proposed order's terms.

By direction of the Commission.

April J. Tabor,

Acting Secretary.

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