

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
TAMPA DIVISION

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION,

Plaintiff,

v.

START CONNECTING LLC, d/b/a USA
Student Debt Relief, a Florida limited
liability company;

START CONNECTING SAS, d/b/a USA
Student Debt Relief, a Colombia
corporation;

DOUGLAS R. GOODMAN, individually
and as an officer of START
CONNECTING LLC;

DORIS E. GALLON-GOODMAN,
individually and as an officer of START
CONNECTING LLC; and

JUAN S. ROJAS, individually and as an
officer of START CONNECTING LLC
and START CONNECTING SAS,

Defendants.

Case No. 8:24-cv-1626-KKM-AAS

FILED UNDER SEAL

**DECLARATION OF D'LANEY GIELOW IN SUPPORT OF
PLAINTIFF'S MOTION TO WAIVE PERSONAL SERVICE
REQUIREMENT AS TO COLOMBIA-BASED DEFENDANTS OR, IN
THE ALTERNATIVE, FOR AN EXTENSION OF THE DEADLINE TO
EFFECT PERSONAL SERVICE**

I, D'Laney Gielow, declare as follows:

1. I am an attorney employed by the Federal Trade Commission (“FTC”), and I am one of the attorneys representing the FTC in this case. My business address is 230 South Dearborn Street, Suite 3030, Chicago, Illinois 60604. I am a member in good standing of the State of Illinois bar, and I am authorized to practice in this Court on behalf of the FTC pursuant to Local Rule 2.01(a). The following facts are within my personal knowledge, except where indicated as “provided on information and belief,” and if called as a witness I could competently testify thereto.

2. Following the issuance of the Temporary Restraining Order in this case on July 11, 2024, FTC staff and the Court-appointed Receiver successfully provided Colombia-based Defendants Juan S. Rojas and his company, Start Connecting SAS, with actual notice of the Temporary Restraining Order and accompanying filings. Specifically:

- a. On July 11, 2024, FTC staff emailed a copy of the TRO; contemporaneously filed pleadings, documents, and exhibits; and the complaint and summons to Defendant Rojas at the following email addresses: attorney@start-connecting.com, jobs@start-connecting.co; and johnr@usastudentdebtrelief.com. Using Microsoft Outlook, FTC staff requested delivery receipts for all the emails: FTC staff received delivery receipts for jobs@start-connecting.co and johnr@usastudentdebtrelief.com. I am also aware that the Court-appointed Receiver caused a copy of the TRO and other related filing(s) to be emailed to Defendant Rojas at the same email addresses on or about July 11, 2024.

- b. Upon information and belief, while the Court-appointed Receiver was at the Florida-based Defendants' home and business premises, located at 1412 Pine Bay Drive, Sarasota, Florida 34231, on July 11, 2024, Defendant Gallon-Goodman called Defendant Rojas and allowed the Receiver to speak directly to Defendant Rojas. The Receiver has informed me that during that phone conversation, the Receiver explained that a TRO had been entered appointing the Receiver and requiring Defendant Rojas to cooperate with the Receiver. The Receiver then handed the conversation off to his investigator, who proceeded to speak with Defendant Rojas on the phone for approximately 45 minutes to an hour. During that conversation, Defendant Rojas acknowledged receiving copies of court documents via email.
- c. On July 12, 2024, FTC staff sent two FedEx packages to Colombia containing the TRO; contemporaneously filed pleadings, documents, and exhibits; and the complaint and summons. The first FedEx package, assigned tracking number 7773 5884 3811, was addressed to Defendant Start Connecting SAS at its business address in Colombia. The second FedEx package, assigned tracking number 7773 5888 7317, was addressed to Defendant Rojas at his apparent home address in Colombia. FedEx tracking records show that both FedEx packages were delivered shortly before noon on July 15, 2024.
- d. On July 15, 2024, at 3:36 p.m. Central time, I emailed another copy of the TRO as well as the complaint and summons to jayrojas423@gmail.com, attorney@start-connecting.com, jobs@startconnecting.co, and johnr@usastudentdebtrelief.com, which are emails that are or have been used by Defendant Rojas. On July 16, 2024, at approximately 10:38 a.m. (CTD), Defendant Rojas used the jayrojas423@gmail.com email account to respond to my email message. In his response, Defendant Rojas stated that he "will fully cooperate with anything you need as soon as I get a chance to speak with an attorney as it is our right." He further stated that "as soon as I get a chance to speak with an attorney I will gather all required docs as requested." I replied to Defendant Rojas's email encouraging him to have any attorney contact the FTC as soon as possible. FTC staff also re-sent additional electronic copies of the other documents filed contemporaneously with the TRO.

- e. On July 16, 2024 and again on July 17, 2024, I attempted to call Defendant Rojas via telephone using the number he had provided to the Receiver's investigator. I did not receive any answer. FTC staff is aware that, since his conversation with Defendant Rojas on July 11, 2024, the Receiver's investigator has also continued attempting to contact Defendant Rojas by telephone and WhatsApp without success.

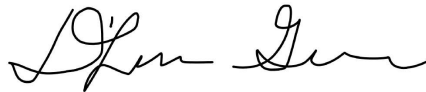
3. In addition to furnishing the Colombian Defendants with actual notice through the means identified above, FTC staff have engaged in ongoing efforts to secure a process server in Colombia. Specifically:

- a. FTC staff are engaged in ongoing conversations with the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Foreign Litigation ("OFL") about the prospect of OFL retaining local counsel in Colombia who can then hire a Colombian process server on the FTC's behalf.
- b. Separately, FTC staff have communicated with Colombia's consumer protection agency, the Superintendence of Industry and Commerce of the Republic of Colombia, about obtaining assistance effecting personal service as part of a recently implemented Multilateral Memorandum of Understanding between the FTC and various Latin American consumer protection authorities.

4. Finally, on July 17, 2024, FTC staff submitted copies of the complaint and the summonses to Colombia's Central Authority for formal service on the Colombian Defendants pursuant to Article 5 of the Hague Convention for Service Abroad of Judicial and Extrajudicial Documents, to which Colombia is a signatory. The FTC's service request remains pending. My understanding is that it will likely take several months before Hague Convention service on the Colombian Defendants is perfected.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed this 17th day of July, 2024.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "D'Laney D. Gielow".

D'Laney D. Gielow
Attorney for Plaintiff FTC