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MODELING AGENT, ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE TRADE BARBS

STATE COLLEGE -- Excel Model Management owner **Kelli Harman** stopped payment on a check to the state Attorney General and her dissatisfied models because she disagreed with a March news release issued by the attorney general's office, the State College-based modeling agent said Thursday.

"I signed the agreement because my attorney didn't want me to spend the time and the money fighting it," Harman said. "I stopped paying because he (Attorney General Mike Fisher) took my money and ruined my agency (by issuing the press release) ... I signed the agreement to get him off my back," she said.

By CHRIS KREWSON

Centre Daily Times Harman's response came after the attorney general's office announced Tuesday that it would seek more than \$5,000 in sanctions against her and her company for breaking a settlement signed March 13.

According to the attorney general's office, in signing the March agreement, Harman agreed to pay the models refunds of money they paid her to help them get modeling jobs, as well as to pay the state more than \$2,000 in investigative costs.

In court action announced Tuesday, the attorney general's office said that Harman had stopped payment on the \$2,000 check and on the refunds. In addition to \$5,000 in sanctions, the state now seeks to bar Harman from operating a modeling agency or being employed in one in Pennsylvania.

Harman maintains that the models seeking refunds turned down modeling jobs or weren't willing to travel from her Johnstown-based office. That office has since closed, she said.

"The reason? When we closed, they didn't want to transfer to the State College office," Harman said. "Who heard of a modeling career in Johnstown?"

Deputy Attorney General Barry Creany maintained that the models were lured to the agency with classified ads that made no mention of required fees for seminars. These ads continued even after the settlement was signed, but under a new company name, Millenia Model and Talent -- a firm that was essentially run by Harman, Creany said.

"In the settlement, there's clearly an assurance that if you're going to have classified ads, you need to have work (for the models). And if you have to pay required fees, put it in the ad,"

Creany said. "If that's a requirement, put it in the print."

Harman said the attorney general's office was acting for personal reasons and was being vindictive because a member of Creany's family was rejected as a model at one of her offices.

Creany said that no member of his immediate or extended family has ever had dealings with Excel or Harman and that her claims about personal motives were "absolutely untrue."

Harman said that in the days preceding and following the settlement, she repeatedly tried to reach Creany and the attorney general's office to work out the differences. She pointed out that if models she's representing aren't working, she is not at fault.

"If (clients) don't accept people, it's because of the way they look," Harman said. "This isn't a normal business; it's not like anything else."

But Creany said Harman never approached him about working out the problem.

"She has never told us that she wants to meet with (the models) -- that's absolutely not true," Creany said. "She stopped payment, she's not paying restitution, so we're asking the court to stop her from doing it again."

A Better Business Bureau of Western Pennsylvania report dated May 22 documented charges against Excel Model Management and states that Harman's business had answered complaints from the Bureau.

A report dated June 5 said that Harman's new company, Millenia Model and Talent, is too new to have developed a company experience record.

Harman's attorney, Robert Rayman, could not be reached for comment.

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