

By Senator Rodriguez

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to consumer protection; creating s.
3 501.172, F.S.; requiring the Department of Agriculture
4 and Consumer Services to operate and maintain a
5 central consumer complaint hotline; requiring the
6 department to establish a toll-free telephone number
7 and a web-based chat function; stating the purpose of
8 the hotline; requiring the department to promote the
9 hotline; specifying the information the department
10 must provide to consumer complainants; providing an
11 effective date.

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13 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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15 Section 1. Section 501.172, Florida Statutes, is created to
16 read:

17 501.172 Consumer protection hotline.-

18 (1) CREATION.-The Department of Agriculture and Consumer
19 Services shall operate and maintain a central consumer complaint
20 hotline through a single statewide toll-free telephone number
21 and via web-based chat.

22 (2) PURPOSE.-The purpose of the consumer complaint hotline
23 is to direct consumers to the appropriate state agency in order
24 to address a consumer complaint regarding a licensed person
25 conducting business in the state or regarding unlicensed
26 activity.

27 (3) PROMOTION.-

28 (a) The department shall promote public awareness of the
29 consumer complaint hotline through community-based partner

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30 organizations and public service campaigns.

31 (b) The department shall post a link to the web-based chat
32 window in a conspicuous part of its website.

33 (4) OPERATION.—For consumers who contact the hotline with a
34 complaint about a licensed person conducting business in this
35 state or regarding unlicensed activity, the department must
36 provide, at a minimum, the following information:

37 (a) The proper agency to contact regarding the consumer's
38 particular complaint.

39 (b) The telephone number and website for such agency.

40 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2018.