

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
TAMPA DIVISION**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

v.

JOSEPH D. JOHNSON,
ANDREW BRYANT, and
CHRISTOPHER BRYANT

Defendant.

Case No. 8:25-cv-2072-WFJ-CPT

Jury Trial Demanded

**DEFENDANT JOSEPH D. JOHNSON'S ANSWER TO
COMPLAINT, AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSES,
AND DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

Defendant Joseph D. Johnson, by and through his undersigned counsel and pursuant to Rules 8(b) and (c) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, files this Answer, Affirmative Defenses, and Demand for Jury Trial to the Plaintiff's Complaint, Doc. 1.

1. Denies.
2. Denies.
3. Denies.
4. Denies.
5. Denies.
6. Denies.
7. Denies.

8. Denies.

9. Denies.

10. Denies.

11. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

12. Denies.

13. Defendant admits residing in the district but denies the remaining allegations.

14. Admits.

15. Admits.

16. Admits that Johnson was an officer and director of Mercy and that Mercy has ceased operations but denies the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

17. Admits that Johnson formed Welfont, Welfont is a Delaware corporation, and Welfont is a parent and holding company for the referenced entities but denies the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

18. Admits.

19. Denies.

20. Denies as to the Defendant but lacks information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

21. Denies as to the Defendant but lacks information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

22. Denies as to the Defendant but lacks information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

23. Denies as to the Defendant but lacks information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

24. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

25. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

26. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

27. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

28. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

29. Denies.

30. Denies.

31. Denies.

32. Denies.

33. Denies.

34. Denies.

35. Denies.

36. Denies.

37. Denies.

38. Denies.

39. Denies.

40. Denies that the activities described are a step in an abusive transaction but otherwise admits the allegations in this paragraph.

41. Denies.

42.

a. Admits.

b. Admits that the LOI lists an OOV for the property that is an estimate of the fair market value of the property but denies the remaining allegations in this subparagraph.

c. Admits.

d. Admits.

e. Admits.

43. Denies that the activities described in this paragraph are a step in abusive transaction but otherwise admits the allegations in this paragraph.

a. Admits.

b. Admits that third-party purchasers were sought for real property but denies the remaining allegations in this subparagraph.

c. Admits that Andrew Bryant and Christopher Bryant prepared appraisals of real property but denies the remaining allegations in this subparagraph.

d. Admits.

e. Admits.

f. Admits.

44. Denies.

45. Denies.

46. Denies.

47. Defendant lacks sufficient information to form a belief about the truth of the allegation regarding the listing date of the Property but admits the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

48. Defendant lacks information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph regarding the time the Property was on the market but admits the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

49. Admits.

50. Admits.

51. Denies.

52. Denies as to the Defendant but Defendant lacks information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

53. Denies.

54. Admits.

55. Denies.

56. Admits.

57. Defendant lacks information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

58. Admits.

59. Admits.

60. Admits.

61. Defendant admits the appraised value of the property was \$11,100,000 but lacks information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

62. Admits.

63. Defendant lacks information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

64. Denies.

65. Denies.

66. Denies.

67. Denies.

68. Denies.

69. Denies.

70. Denies.

71. Denies.

72. Denies.

73. Denies.

74. Denies.

75. Denies.

76. Denies.

77. Denies.

78. Denies.

79. Denies.

80. Denies.

81. Denies.

82. Denies.

83. Denies.

84. Denies.

85. Denies.

86. Admits.

87. Denies.

88. Denies.

89. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

90. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

91. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

92. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

93. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

94. Denies.

95. Denies.

96. Denies.

97. Denies.

98. Denies.

99. Denies.

100. Denies.

101. Denies.

102. Denies.

103. Admits.

104. Denies.

105. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph, including subparagraphs (a) through (e), and therefore denies them.

106. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

107. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

108. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

109. Denies.

110. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

111. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

112. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

113. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

114. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

115. Denies.

116. Denies.

117. Denies.

118. Denies.

119. Admits.

120. Denies.

121. Denies.

122. Admits.

123. Denies.

124. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

125. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

126. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

127. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

128. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

129. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

130. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

131. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

132. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

133. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

134. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

135. This paragraph asserts legal conclusions; to the extent an answer is required, defendant denies.

136. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

137. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

138. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

139. Denies.

140. Denies.

141. Denies as to Defendant but lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

142. Denies.

143. Denies.

144. Denies.

145. Denies.

146. Denies.

147. Denies.

148. Denies.

149. Denies.

150. Denies.

151. Denies.

152. Denies.

153. Denies.

154. Denies.

155. Denies.

156. Denies.

157. Denies.

158. Denies.

159. Denies.

160. Denies.

161. Denies.

162. Denies.

163. Denies.

164. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

165. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

166. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

167. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

168. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

169. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

170. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

171. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

172. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

173. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

174. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

175. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

176. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

177. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

178. Denies.

179. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

180. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

181. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

182. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

183. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

184. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

185. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

186. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

187. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

188. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

189. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

190. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

191. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

192. Defendant lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph and therefore denies them.

Defendant denies that Plaintiff is entitled to any of its relief requested at Paragraphs A to K on pages 36 to 41 of the Complaint, inclusive.

AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSES

Plaintiff has failed to establish a right to relief based on its allegations. In addition, the following affirmative defenses would nullify any potential claims by Plaintiff, in whole or in part. Defendant reserves the right to seek leave of the Court to amend to plead any additional affirmative defenses that become available or apparent.

FIRST DEFENSE

Plaintiff fails to state a claim upon which injunctive relief can be granted because there is no likelihood the Defendant will commit future violations nor is there any possibility of irreparable harm absent the entry of an injunction.

SECOND DEFENSE

Plaintiff's claims are barred by the applicable statute of limitations.

THIRD DEFENSE

Plaintiff's claims are arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with law and therefore unlawful pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 706(2)(A) of the Administrative Procedure Act.

FOURTH DEFENSE

Plaintiff acted without observance of procedure required by law in violation of 5 U.S.C. § 706(2)(D).

FIFTH DEFENSE

Plaintiff's claims are barred by the equitable doctrines of laches, estoppel, and unclean hands.

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Defendant Joseph D. Johnson hereby demands a trial by jury on any and all issues so triable.

Dated: October 14, 2025

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Matthew J. Mueller
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*Attorneys for Defendant Joseph D.
Johnson*

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that on October 14, 2025, I electronically filed the foregoing with the Clerk of the Court and the parties of record by using the CM/ECF system.

/s/ Matthew J. Mueller
Matthew J. Mueller, FBN: 0047366
Attorney for Defendant Joseph D.
Johnson