

New York Gym Chain Sued for Charging Fees Amid Virus Closure

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A New York Sports Clubs customer claims in a lawsuit she's still being charged membership fees even after facilities have been shuttered by the coronavirus.

The club's owner, Town Sports International Inc., is making it "virtually impossible" to cancel memberships and refusing to honor cancellations, according to the complaint, which was filed as a class action. Mary Namorato, who said she joined the club in January 2019 for \$69.99 a month, called these practices "the height of corporate greed" at a time when other gym chains have taken it upon themselves to suspend membership charges.

New York Sports Clubs began operations as a cluster of squash clubs in the 1970s before introducing exercise classes and expanding up and down the U.S. east coast. Town Sports operates almost 100 New York Sports Clubs gyms in New York, Connecticut and New Jersey, according to its website. The company didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

"People around the country are feeling enormous financial strain due to 'shelter-in-place'

regulations, business closures, abrupt mass layoffs and the recent market collapse," according to the complaint. "As a result, numerous gyms chains have on their own accord announced that membership charges will be suspended. TSI has not -- and this conduct is the height of corporate greed, lack of empathy and putting profits before people."

Namorato cites more than a dozen postings from club members on Yelp and Facebook complaining about the charges and urging the company to freeze memberships or suspend fees while the gyms are closed.

A yellow banner across the homepage of the club's website says facilities are temporarily closed to adhere with state and federal guidelines on Covid-19. "We will miss all of our valued members and whenever this passes we'll be back at our clubs waiting for you," it says.

The case is *Namorato v. Town Sports International LLC*, 20-cv-2580, U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York.