

Statement of Rosa-La Williams, Honolulu, Hawaii

My name is Sgt. Rosa-La Williams. I am a supply staff sergeant with the U.S. Army based in Honolulu. I have a 9-year daughter and a baby on the way. It's funny, I can laugh about what happened with my car now because it has been going on for years, but I wasn't laughing back then.

Two years ago, I went to a big auto dealer here named Auto Source, a place where a lot of service members buy vehicles. They have a beautiful showroom; it's indoors with marble floors. I wanted a BMW, so I did my research before going in and got my financing together beforehand, too. I was pretty surprised that I was able to talk them down \$4,000 and purchase the vehicle for \$20,000. But I had some reservations while I was waiting to receive the check from my bank to pay the dealer.

The front headlights were not working right and even though the car came with a written warranty, it was not in detail. That bothered me. The dealer said to come back with my check and they would fix the lights. I did that, and when I picked up the car, the lights worked at first. I was happy, or so I thought. The very next morning, the lights didn't work. I called them and brought the car back three times altogether. The lights still come on when they want to and turn off when they want to. There was no prior history report on this. So I decided to call BMW to see if it was still under a manufacturer's warranty. When I gave them the VIN number, they said that no, it was not under warranty and should not even be on the road because it was totaled. It had hit a tree on another island and the engine had caught fire. It had gone to a "Pimp My Ride" kind of high-end body shop and they made it look really nice. You could never tell from the body that there was an accident and fire; there was no smell.

I told the dealer this and he didn't believe me. BMW sent me a computer printout of their records and I faxed it to the dealer. All of this happened within a few weeks of buying my BMW. I went to the dealer and said I wanted my money back, the vehicle doesn't work right and I have a child I'm worried to drive in the car with. The owner of Auto Source was very mean and rude to me. He said no, you don't get your money back, too bad, so sad. I told him, "Do you understand, as a service member, I can go to military lawyers and make sure that other service members don't buy from you," but he wouldn't budge. I meanwhile learned that the same car had already been returned to him several times by other customers before he sold it to me.

We drove it for a couple of months because we had to. First it was the headlights, and then the engine started knocking. By then I was getting ready to deploy to Iraq, so the military referred me to a lawyer to investigate my case and I left the car with my mother. He has a whole list of people with problems like mine.

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