



State of Maryland AGENCY NEWS

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Maryland Secretary of State, Attorney General Warn of Possible Charity Scams Related to COVID-19

ANNAPOLIS, MD—The Federal Trade Commission has reported that scammers are taking advantage of fears surrounding the coronavirus, including through the sale of counterfeit products and the solicitation of money and personal information. When charities request donations in response to the coronavirus, Marylanders may feel duty-bound to donate in an effort to help their neighbors. Maryland’s Secretary of State John C. Wobensmith and Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh are cautioning Marylanders to be vigilant and to donate wisely.

“During uncertain times, con artists prey on your generosity and create scams, frauds or deceptive acts to line their own pockets,” warns Secretary Wobensmith. “Be sure you know who you are giving to, and remember it is always best to give directly to well-established, reputable charitable organizations.”

The Office of the Secretary of State registers and regulates charitable organizations that solicit charitable contributions in Maryland. Together with the Attorney General’s Office, the Secretary of State’s Office works to ensure that charitable contributions go to qualified charitable organizations and are used for their intended purpose.

“Fraudsters will take advantage of nearly any opportunity to steal other people’s money,” said Attorney General Frosh. “Consumers can avoid being cheated by understanding how thieves are trying to steal their personal information and money. It is always wise to research the charity first before donating, and avoid any charity or fundraiser that is reluctant to give information on how donations are used.”

For more tips on how to give wisely, Marylanders can visit the Maryland Attorney General’s Office, Consumer Protection Division publication [Consumer’s Edge Charitable Giving Tips](#).

The Office of the Secretary of State maintains a public registry of charitable organizations authorized to solicit in Maryland. For more information and to search the registry, please visit the [Secretary of State’s charities database](#).

If you think that you have been a victim of a deceptive or illegal charitable solicitation, contact the Charities and Legal Services Division of the Secretary of State’s Office: 410-974-5521 or 1-800-825-4510.

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