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Top federal and state prosecutors form Delaware COVID-19 anti-fraud coalition

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Today, United States Attorney David C. Weiss and Delaware Attorney General Kathleen Jennings announced the formation of a new Coronavirus (COVID-19) Anti-Fraud Coalition, aimed at better protecting the citizens of Delaware from criminal and civil fraud arising from the pandemic.

The Coalition is comprised of local, state and federal agencies, investigators and prosecutors with significant experience in handling complaints and cases related to consumer fraud, financial fraud, heath care fraud, and cybercrime. Together, the Coalition will share information and resources to monitor, identify and investigate misconduct to protect the people of Delaware from those exploiting the COVID-19 pandemic for their own advantage.

Agencies participating in the Coalition include:

- Delaware Department of Justice
- United States Attorney's Office
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security-Homeland Security Investigations
- U.S. Small Business Administration-Office of Inspector General
- U.S. Department of Labor-Office of Inspector General
- Delaware Department of Health & Social Services
- Delaware Office of Management & Budget
- Delaware Department of Transportation
- Delaware Department of Education
- Delaware Department of Insurance
- Delaware Department of Finance
- Delaware Department of Labor
- Delaware Auditor of Accounts
- Delaware State Police
- New Castle County

Participating agencies will take information, tips and complaints from the public, as well as other local law enforcement agencies seeking the Coalition's assistance.

"This pandemic is ripe for exploitation by scammers," said Attorney General Jennings. "The Delaware Department of Justice and its Fraud Division works each day to educate consumers, prevent fraud, and bring scammers to justice—but our work will never be done as long as consumers continue to be preyed upon by those who profit shamelessly off of their fears and anxiety. Our collaboration with the U.S. Attorney's Office is the latest chapter in a longstanding record of partnership, and in this public health and economic crisis it has never been more important for everyone at the federal, state, and local level to collaborate on the people's behalf."

"Sadly, criminals look to take advantage of people, regardless of the circumstances," said David C. Weiss, U.S. Attorney for the District of Delaware. "But the people of Delaware can rest assured that we will be relentless in bringing to justice those seeking to illegally profit from this crisis. If you believe you are the victim of a scam, or have been contacted by someone falsely claiming to be a representative of the government, please contact the Coalition at one of the below email addresses immediately. I want to thank our local and state partners for their commitment to combating fraud and protecting Delawareans. By working together, we are more fully able to identify, investigate, and prosecute these criminal acts of fraud related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In these challenging times, I am grateful for this type of collaboration, which represents the best of public service."

Be on the lookout for and be wary of potential COVID-19 scams and abuses. Any information, complaints, or concerns can be reported to the Coalition by email to COVID.DOJ@delaware.gov (mailto:COVID.DOJ@delaware.gov) or USADE-COVIDFRAUD@usdoj.gov (mailto:USADE-COVIDFRAUD@usdoj.gov).

Delawareans who may have been scammed can also reach out to the Attorney General's consumer protection hotline at (800) 220-5424. In addition, you can also contact the National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) by hotline (866-720-5721) or to the NCDF e-mail address disaster@leo.gov (mailto:disaster@leo.gov).

Common scams and frauds include:

- **Economic Impact Payment (Stimulus Check):** Scammers pretend to be government officials offering false economic impact payments (stimulus checks) in order to obtain personal identifying information including social security and bank account numbers.
- **Diagnosis Testing Scams:** Scammers offer fake COVID-19 testing kits, particularly door-to-door.
- **Treatment/Cure Scams:** Scammers offer fake or unproven treatment regimens that are particularly dangerous because they have the potential to do more harm than good.
- **Charity Scams:** Virtually every time there is a disaster or emergency, scammers set up fake charities to solicit donations that they then spend on themselves.
- **Overinflated prices:** The Coalition will use every tool available to hold sellers accountable who unlawfully use the COVID-19 pandemic to unreasonably inflate prices.
- **Investment Scams:** Scammers make false claims about tests, cures and other matters related to COVID-19 in order to entice victims to make investment decisions based on those false claims that allow the scammer to steal money and assets from Delawareans.
- **Cyber Scams:** Scammers send victims emails related to COVID-19 that appear to be from the victims' banks, health care providers, the World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and others for the purpose of obtaining the victims' personal identifying information and exploiting it for the scammers' own benefit.
- **App Scams**: Scammers are creating and manipulating mobile apps designed to track the spread of COVID-19 to insert malware that will compromise users' devices and personal information.
- **Insurance, Workers' Compensation and Medicaid Fraud:** Businesses and government agencies are not immune to scams. They should also be vigilant to ensure scammers do not take advantage of their businesses or customers during this pandemic.
- **Scams specifically targeted at seniors**: Seniors are more vulnerable than ever to common scams like the Grandparent Scam and Government Imposter Scams. Consumers receiving a call or any contact claiming that loved ones are in danger or hurt, that they owe money and failure to pay will result in their arrest or other harm, or that their benefits are in jeopardy, do not act. Contact your loved ones or the purported agency using known, trusted contact information not sourced from the suspicious communication.

(https://news.delaware.gov/2020/04/24/top-federal-and-state-prosecutors-form-delaware-covid-19-anti-fraud-coalition/?print=pdf)

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