



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **AG Frosh Secures Settlement with Property Tax Appeal Company Posing as State Agency** *Business must fully refund over 450 consumers*

**Baltimore, MD (June 27, 2016)** -- Attorney General Brian E. Frosh announced today that his Consumer Protection Division entered into a settlement with Baltimore County-based Maryland Property Review Board, LLC and its owners ("MPRB"). MPRB charged over 450 Maryland consumers \$99 each to file an appeal of the consumers' property tax assessment - something consumers can do themselves for free. The settlement resolves allegations that MPRB advertised its services to consumers by sending letters that were designed to look as if they came from a State agency, and misrepresented the amount by which it could lower consumers' property taxes.

"Masquerading as a government agency is deceitful, and poses as a real threat to consumers who unknowingly send money," said Attorney General Frosh. "Misrepresentation to consumers is a violation of the Maryland Consumer Protection Act and our office intends to continue our pursuit of any companies who attempt to mislead consumers about services they provide."

MPRB's letters stated that they came from the "Maryland Property Review Board Office of Petitions," and that consumers could reduce their property tax bill by returning the "statement" with a \$99 "filing fee." The Division also alleged that MPRB misrepresented the amount by which the company could reduce the consumers' property tax - the company's letters always stated that consumers could save the same amount: \$1,346.00.

The settlement requires MPRB to return all payments it has collected from consumers and to pay a civil penalty of \$200,000, with half of that amount waived if MPRB complies with the other terms of the settlement. Though the company ceased operating after the Division began its investigation, and has indicated that it will no longer operate or provide property tax appeal services, the settlement prohibits the company from misrepresenting its affiliation with the State, misrepresenting its ability to decrease consumers' property taxes, and misleading consumers about the services it provides. All consumers who paid \$99 to MPRB, and who have not already received refunds, should receive refunds by August 1, 2016.

For more information about the settlement, Marylanders can contact the Consumer Protection Division at 410-576-6569. Consumers who want to learn more about the free process to appeal their property assessment through the Department of Assessments and Taxation ("DAT"), are encouraged to visit the DAT website at <http://dat.maryland.gov/realproperty/Pages/default.aspx>.