



PRESS RELEASE

Attorney General Frosh, Secretary of State Wobensmith Announce Settlement in Look-A-Like Cancer Charity Scheme

BALTIMORE, MD (March 9, 2018) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh and Secretary of State John C. Wobensmith today announced a settlement agreement reached with a look-a-like cancer charity based in Maryland that unlawfully used a name similar to the American Cancer Society to collect donations from unsuspecting donors.

“Look-A-Like charities cheat consumers and the legitimate charities that they mimic,” said Attorney General Frosh. “We’ve stopped yet another charity scheme and protected charitable assets that support vital cancer research and cancer victims.”

An investigation by the Attorney General and Secretary of State into Cancer Society of America, Inc., dba USA Cancer Foundation, Inc., revealed that not only did the organization masquerade as the American Cancer Society online and on social media websites, but the organization lacked proper accounting controls and had no third-party oversight of financial activities.

As a result of this investigation, on June 15, 2017, the Secretary of State issued a cease and desist order citing multiple violations of the Maryland Solicitations Act.

The settlement announced today includes the organization’s agreement to continue ceasing all charitable solicitations and agreement not to accept any additional donations. The organization’s founder and director, Farbod (Tony) Afkhami, also agreed to a seven year ban on charitable fundraising and soliciting. Mr. Afkhami further agreed to turn over \$14,000.00 in remaining charitable donations to the American Cancer Society, in addition to \$110.00 in donations that were erroneously kept by the organization but intended for the American Lung Association.

“Our office is committed to protecting the public from those who use deceit to divert charitable donations,” said Secretary of State John C. Wobensmith. “We encourage citizens to report any suspicious charities to our office, and to research the registration and financial information before giving to a charity.”

The Secretary of State registers and regulates charitable organizations and their professional solicitors who operate in Maryland. Together with the assistance of the Maryland Attorney General, the Secretary of State enforces Maryland’s charitable giving laws to ensure that donations are used for their intended purpose. Maryland donors may visit

<http://sos.maryland.gov/Charity/Pages/Giving-Wisely.aspx> for tips on how to give wisely to charities.

Individuals who think they may have been a victim of a deceptive or illegal charitable solicitation may call the Charities and Legal Services Division, Secretary of State's Office at [410-974-5521](tel:410-974-5521) or [1-800-825-4510](tel:1-800-825-4510).