



PRESS RELEASE

Attorney General Frosh Warns of Recent Uptick in Scammers Targeting Small Business *Scammers Are Using Threats of “Past-Due” Payments to Defraud Business Owners*

BALTIMORE, MD (October 11, 2018) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh is warning small business owners of an increase in scammers impersonating utility companies and others, claiming that the businesses owe money and threatening to cut off service if they don’t make immediate payment in the form of a Green Dot card.

A Green Dot card is one of many prepaid credit card companies that allows users to load a specific amount of money and send it to someone else, making it a popular choice among scammers. The scam works by intimidating and threatening small business owners, generally with a phone call, into believing that one of their utilities is about to be cut off, or some of their wholesale products have a balance that must be paid before delivery, or a similar claim intended to cause alarm. The scammer will instruct their target to purchase a Green Dot card and to load the amount of the outstanding payment onto the card. The scammer will then ask for the card information to access the funds.

“No legitimate business or utility will call and ask you to make a payment using a Green Dot card,” said Attorney General Frosh. “This is a scam, pure and simple. Don’t become a victim; just hang-up if you receive a suspicious call.”

It is very difficult if not impossible to recoup money stolen by a criminal utilizing the “Green Dot card” scam. A small business could suffer significant financial consequences, even the loss of the business itself, if its owners fall victim to this scheme. The best defense against this particular scam is never to provide any type of payment or financial information to a caller asking you to pay a debt using a prepaid credit card, gift card, or express money transfer.

If you have received a call from someone impersonating a legitimate authority, such as a utility company representative, who asks you to make an immediate payment using one of the methods described above, please call the Maryland Office of the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division at 410-528-8662 to report it.