



PRESS RELEASE

Attorney General Frosh, Secretary of State Wobensmith Announce Multistate Settlement with Organization that Claimed to Help Servicemembers

BALTIMORE, MD (August 14, 2019) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh and Secretary of State John C. Wobensmith announced today that Maryland has joined a multistate settlement with Hearts 2 Heroes Inc., a for-profit company doing business as Active Duty Support Services Inc., which made door-to-door sales of “care packages” ostensibly to be sent to servicemembers overseas. The states allege that the company violated state consumer protection and charitable solicitation law, including the Maryland Solicitations Act, by misrepresenting the nature of the business and the care packages purchased, and by misusing donated funds. Under the terms of the settlement, the company has ceased operations and its owners are permanently banned from engaging in charitable solicitations or working for a charitable organization.

The states allege that Hearts 2 Heroes violated state consumer protection and charitable solicitation law by:

- leading prospective donors to believe that Hearts 2 Heroes is a charity, when it is not, and that donations made are tax deductible, when they are not;
- delivering care packages, if delivered at all, to military bases in the United States, not overseas as represented;
- representing to consumers that staff were veterans or volunteers when in fact those staff were not veterans or volunteers; and,
- employing staff who would “skim” cash donations for personal use.

The settlement also includes a \$286,959.95 restitution judgment against the now-defunct company, which will be held in abeyance and enforced if the terms of the settlement are not met, and a total of \$10,000 in payments to the states.

“Solicitors for this sham charity went door to door to deceive donors, under the guise of helping members of our military,” said Attorney General Frosh. “This is another reminder to give wisely and remain vigilant against those who take advantage of the goodwill and generosity of donors.”

“Through collaboration with neighboring state charity regulators, we have put an end to another charity scheme targeting Maryland’s citizens,” said Secretary Wobensmith. “I commend the dedication and commitment of the multistate team for the result in this case.”

In addition to Maryland, the settlement included the states of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia.

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> on the Secretary of State's website for tips on how to give wisely to charities.

Any questions about the settlement can be directed to Assistant Attorney General Josaphine B. Yuzuik at (410) 260-3855.

Individuals who think that 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).