



Consumer Alert

Consumer Alert: Attorney General Warns Marylanders About “Community Development Block Grant” Scam

BALTIMORE, MD (November 13, 2019) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh is warning Marylanders that scammers are contacting individuals claiming they are entitled to, or have been awarded a “Community Development Block Grant,” “Community Services Block Grant,” or “CSBG for seniors.” This is a scam to obtain personal information and/or money in the form of upfront “fees” (in one reported case, the scammer asked for \$1,000 in gift cards). There have been reports of these scammers reaching out through email and text messaging, but they could also reach out to potential victims by phone.

Marylanders should disregard and delete immediately any messages that claim they have won or are entitled to a community block grant or similar-sounding name. Hang up on any person who calls claiming that you have been awarded one of these grants. While the Community Services Block Grant and Community Development Block Grants do exist, both are administered by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. These Programs are administered as part of a U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program intended to distribute federal funds directly to state governments, local jurisdictions, and non-profits for housing and other social services programs. These grants are NOT awarded to private citizens.

If you have not directly applied for a grant or aid, the chances are extremely high that someone offering to “award” you one is a scam artist. Do not send money or gift cards to anyone requesting upfront fees or taxes on a grant, award, or anything else they claim you have “won.” Requesting money or prepaid debit/credit or gift cards is a red flag that you are being targeted by a scammer.

You can report these messages to the Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General (www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov) or the Federal Trade Commission (www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov).