



**BRIAN E. FROSH, MARYLAND ATTORNEY GENERAL**

# **PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Attorney General Frosh Announces Settlement with Tax Debt Relief Company**

***National Tax Experts, Inc. and Patrick Oakes Agree to Refund Payments, Pay Civil Penalties, and Permanent Ban on Offering Tax Debt Relief Services in Maryland***

**BALTIMORE, MD**— Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh announced today his Consumer protection Division has reached a [settlement](#) with California-based National Tax Experts, Inc. and Patrick Oakes, the company’s owner. The settlement provides restitution to Maryland consumers, imposes civil penalties, and permanently bans the company from providing tax debt relief services to Maryland consumers.

The Division alleged in its Statement of Charges that National Tax Experts sent deceptive advertisements to Marylanders that were intended to appear as if they were sent by a Maryland court and falsely warned consumers that their assets were facing imminent seizure. In fact, the mailers were from National Tax Experts and were designed to induce consumers to hire the company to help settle their outstanding tax debts. The Division further alleged that National Tax Experts did not actually settle the tax debts and that its sale of services violated the Maryland Credit Services Businesses Act, the Maryland Debt Settlement Services Act, and the Maryland Consumer Protection Act.

“Companies cannot misrepresent who they are when advertising their services, and must provide the services for which they are paid,” said Attorney General Frosh. “Consumers who were harmed by the illegal practices will be issued refunds, and this company and its owner will never again be allowed to offer tax debt relief services in Maryland.”

In the settlement, National Tax Experts and Oakes agreed to refund all payments made by approximately 135 Maryland consumers to National Tax Experts since February 2017, the date the company was purchased by Oakes. National Tax Experts may reduce the refunds it pays to consumers if it can demonstrate that it performed actual work for consumers, either by preparing and filing tax returns or settling consumers’ tax debts. The settlement also requires National Tax Experts and Oakes to pay a civil penalty of \$100,000, which could be reduced to

\$50,000. National Tax Experts and Oakes also agreed to cease offering and selling tax debt relief services to Maryland consumers.

Consumers who are eligible for refunds will be contacted by the Attorney General's Office. Consumers may contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at 410-576-6569 with questions.

In making today's announcement, Attorney General Frosh thanked Assistant Attorney General Christopher Madaio and Deputy Chief Phillip Ziperman for their work on the case.

<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2021/070621.pdf>