



ANTHONY G. BROWN, MARYLAND ATTORNEY GENERAL

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contacts:
press@oag.state.md.us
410-576-7009

AT&T and Cricket Violated the Consumer Protection Act in Sales of Cellphones During Implementation of Corporate Merger; Finding Upheld by Appellate Court of Maryland
Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division Found that Companies Should Have Disclosed to Consumers Their Plans to Render the Phones Inoperable

BALITMORE, MD (September 8, 2023) – The Appellate Court of Maryland has [upheld](#) a Final Order issued by the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division (CPD) finding that AT&T, Inc., and Cricket Wireless LLC engaged in unfair and deceptive trade practices, in violation of the Maryland Consumer Protection Act, when they sold Cricket cellphones that they knew would stop working after Cricket and AT&T entered into a corporate merger agreement in 2013.

In its July 21, 2021, Final Order, CPD found that the companies' merger plans included decommissioning Cricket's CDMA wireless network, which would, and ultimately did, cause Cricket's CDMA-only cellphones to stop working. Our Consumer Protection Division determined that AT&T and Cricket violated the Consumer Protection Act by continuing to sell the CDMA-only devices to Maryland consumers for more than 18 months before shutting down Cricket's CDMA network. The company ultimately sold more than 50,000 soon-to-be-inoperable devices in Maryland, without adequately disclosing their plan to render the devices inoperable. The Division ordered AT&T and Cricket to refrain from similar conduct in the future, to provide restitution to consumers who purchased Cricket CDMA-only devices during the relevant period, and to pay civil penalties.

The Appellate Court of Maryland rejected all of the companies' challenges to CPD's July 2021 Final Order, including the companies' claim that, during the period when their merger agreement was pending for regulatory approval, it was immaterial to consumers whether phones offered for sale might soon stop working.

“Purchasing a brand-new mobile phone and expecting it to have a reasonable lifespan is not an unreasonable expectation,” **said Attorney General Brown**. “For many Marylanders, having a working, dependable phone is a lifeline that impacts almost every aspect of daily life – it

connects people to employment, school, news, important alerts, and each other. Consumers who have been deceived or treated unfairly in this State take note: my Consumer Protection Division will fight back.”

Consumers who purchased a Cricket CDMA-only cellphone that later stopped working may contact the Consumer Protection Division at 410-528-8662 or file a complaint online at www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov.

<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2023/090823.pdf>