

# State of Maryland

## Agency News



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### **Secretary of State's Office Warns Marylanders to Beware of Charity Scams This Holiday Season**

**ANNAPOLIS, MD** – As the holidays approach, Governor Larry Hogan and Secretary of State John Wobensmith warn citizens to beware of scam charities and deceptive practices. Charities in Maryland and beyond rely upon the generosity of citizens to provide programs and services to those in need across the state.

While the holidays inspire a spirit of generosity among many Marylanders, it is important to be vigilant about scams that are posing as legitimate charitable organizations.

All charities who solicit money in Maryland are required to register with the Office of the Secretary of State if they collect \$25,000 or more in direct public support or use paid solicitors to raise funds for the organization. Marylanders can use the Secretary of State website to confirm if a charity is authorized to raise money in Maryland: <http://sos.maryland.gov/Charity/Pages/SearchCharity.aspx>.

The Secretary of State's Office urges citizens to recognize "red flags" that can help determine if a charity is worthy of support. Ask questions and be suspicious of any charity that won't provide satisfactory information. Examples of "red flags" that should help you question whether a charity is worthy of your support include:

- Did the organization refuse to send you written material or financial information?
- Did the solicitor offer to send a person to collect your contribution?
- Did the charity send you an invoice or statement that indicates a payment due for a contribution you never pledged?
- Does the organization's name and logo closely resemble another charity with a similar purpose?

The Secretary of State's Office investigates complaints about charity fraud. If you think you've been the victim of a scam or to report a potential scam charity, contact the Investigations Unit at [410-260-3879](tel:410-260-3879) or [800-825-4510](tel:800-825-4510).

More information about charities can be found on the Secretary of State's Charity page: <http://sos.maryland.gov>.

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