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OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

OAG Update on COVID-19 Price Gouging



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody's Office is taking swift action to address allegations of price gouging. Attorney General Moody assembled a Rapid Response Team to quickly respond to reports of unlawful price increases. Since the Governor's COVID-19 emergency declaration activating Florida's price gouging laws, Moody's office has issued dozens of subpoenas, deactivated more than 100 online posts and secured thousands in direct refunds for consumers.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Today marks three weeks since I activated Florida's Price Gouging Hotline and already we are getting results for Floridians. Our first goal is to deter price gouging in real time so consumers can afford the essential commodities they need to stay healthy as we fight the COVID-19 pandemic together. While my Rapid Response Team is contacting businesses, securing refunds and working with online platforms to remove outrageous posts, we are also issuing subpoenas and preserving evidence to advance our price gouging investigations.

"We are most effective when Floridians help us, so I want to encourage anyone who sees exorbitant price increases on essential commodities to please contact my office immediately so we can address the matter as soon as possible."

Since activating Florida's Price Gouging Hotline, the Florida Attorney General's Office has:

- Received approximately 1,210 consumer contacts about the price of essential commodities;
- Made more than 1,900 referrals and contacts to merchants about allegations of price gouging, refunds and scams;
- Secured more than $79,000 in refunds related to travel, leisure and product purchases;
- Issued 56 subpoenas to further price gouging investigations; and
- Worked with online platforms to deactivate more than 100 posts offering items for outrageous prices.

Approximately 40 percent of consumer contacts involve online posts and ads. About the same percentage are from consumers who did not make purchases. Additionally, Attorney General Moody recently announced an investigation into Norwegian Cruise Lines. The Attorney General's Office is also taking action against third-party sellers using Amazon to allegedly gouge consumers.

Violators of the price gouging statute are subject to civil penalties of $1,000 per violation and up to a total of $25,000 for multiple violations committed in a single 24-hour period.

For more information on price gouging, click here.

For a list of the commodities covered under the state's price gouging laws during the COVID-19 state of emergency, click here.

Price gouging can be reported by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM, visiting MyFloridaLegal.com or downloading the NO SCAM smartphone app.

For tips on reporting price gouging, click here.

Since the COVID-19 emergency declaration, Attorney General Moody has issued four Consumer Alerts with information about emerging scams and tips to avoid fraud. To view the latest alerts and to stay up-to-date on COVID-19 related scams, visit the Attorney General's Consumer Alert webpage by clicking here.