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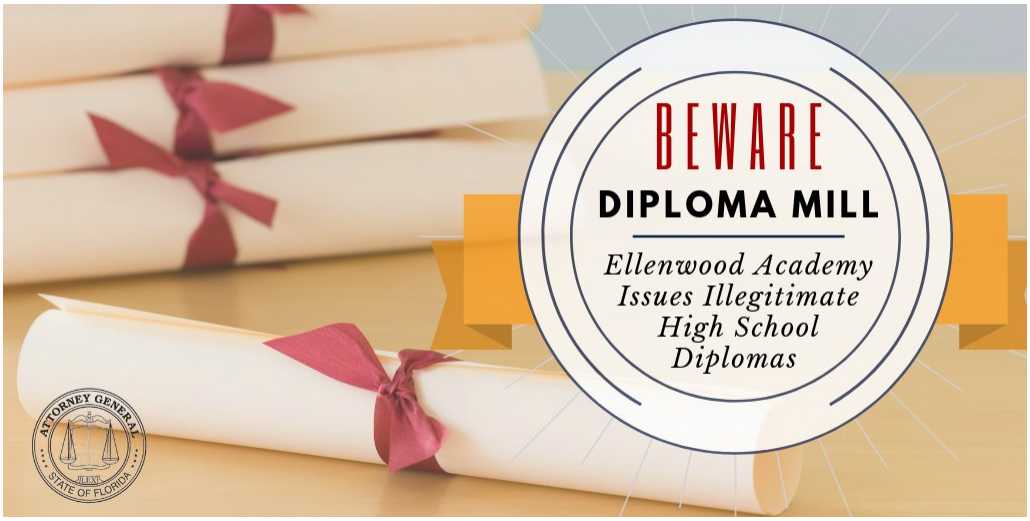
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Court Action Filed to Shut Down Diploma Mill



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today filed a court action in Hillsborough County to shut down a Florida diploma mill. The action stems from complaints against Ellenwood Academy, LLC for deceptive marketing of illegitimate high school diplomas to consumers in Florida and nationwide. The organization allegedly charges consumers $195 to enroll in a high school program and take an exam but does not employ any faculty or provide any instruction for consumers. Ellenwood diplomas are not accepted for admission to any school in Florida's State University System.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "There are no shortcuts to success, yet diploma mills continue to falsely market easy alternatives to the hard work it takes to earn an education. Students often enroll with the goal of obtaining a diploma to advance their careers, but often leave with a worthless piece of paper. Anyone who encounters a diploma mill should report it to my office by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or by visiting MyFloridaLegal.com."

Ellenwood Academy's website claims to produce accredited high school diplomas that will give consumers the credentials required for most jobs. According to an investigation by the Florida Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division, Ellenwood requires only a passing score on a multiple-choice online exam that consumers can retake as many times as needed. If participants achieve a passing score, supply identification and payment, Ellenwood will issue the consumers a diploma. Between 2015 and 2017, more than 3,000 people enrolled in the program.

The academy allegedly falsely claimed to be registered with the Florida Department of Education, implying it offered accredited services to consumers. Ellenwood also claims to be

associated with Accrediting Commission International, a non-governmental accrediting organization that is not recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. According to complaints, consumers could not obtain or maintain employment because of an illegitimate Ellenwood diploma.

The Attorney General Office is seeking injunctive relief, consumer restitution, and civil penalties pursuant to the Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act.

To view the Attorney General's complaint, click here.

To learn more about earning high school diplomas at an accredited school, visit the Florida Department of Education website. For information on how to determine the legitimacy of an online educational institution, click here, or for tips by the Better Business Bureau, click here.

Anyone suspecting deceptive or unfair business practices can file a complaint with the Attorney General's Office online at MyFloridaLegal.com or via phone at 1(866) 9NO-SCAM.