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## **NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **AG Kaul Warns Wisconsin Residents of COVID-19 Scams and Price Gouging**

MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul today urged Wisconsin residents to be on the lookout for potential scams or instances of price gouging stemming from the outbreak of COVID-19.

“As we take extraordinary steps to respond to the coronavirus, Wisconsinites should be cautious of those who may be trying to take advantage of this public health emergency,” warned Attorney General Kaul. “I encourage everyone to report potential scams and price gouging and to take precautions, such as relying on verified and trusted sources of information, to guard against fraud.”

#### **Protect Yourself from Scams**

Attorney General Kaul encourages people to take the following precautions:

- Beware of phishing emails, phone calls, and texts. The Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) has heard of emails from scammers claiming to be from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO). If you want to ensure you are receiving valid information from a government official, insurance adjuster, or healthcare representative, go directly to the source instead of responding to an unsolicited communication. Do not provide personal information such as your social security number or date of birth to an unsolicited caller.
- Beware of any claim of a vaccine or a cure for COVID-19. According to the FDA, there are currently no approved vaccines, drugs, or other products available to treat or cure the virus. Instead of listening to unverified claims, residents

should follow the guidance of their healthcare providers, the Wisconsin Department of Health, the CDC, or the WHO.

- Report possible scams to the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). If you suspect that you received a fraudulent communication or are contacted about a possible scam, AG Kaul asks you to file a complaint with the DATCP at [DATCPHotline@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DATCPHotline@wisconsin.gov), through their toll-free hotline at (800) 422-7128, or online at <https://datcp.wi.gov>.
- Exercise caution when donating to a charity. Under Wisconsin law, fundraisers and charitable organizations are required to register with the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions (DFI). AG Kaul encourages residents to do their own research and verify that a charity is legitimate when donating. Fraudulent charities may use high-pressure sales tactics. If you believe that you were contacted by a fraudulent charity, report the interaction with DFI. For more information, please visit <https://wdfi.org/charitableorganizations/>.

### **Report Price Gouging**

Wisconsin's laws prohibiting price gouging are now in effect after Governor Evers issued Executive Order #72 on March 12. These laws generally prohibit any wholesaler or retailer from selling consumer goods or services at prices that are more than 15% higher than pre-emergency prices. There are, however, some exceptions to the prohibition. If you suspect that price gouging may be occurring, report your concerns to DATCP at [DATCPHotline@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DATCPHotline@wisconsin.gov), through their toll-free hotline at (800) 422-7128, or online at <https://datcp.wi.gov>.

If you are unsure as to where to report your consumer concerns, please contact DOJ's Consumer Protection Hotline at 1-800-998-0700.