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## **NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **AG Kaul Recognizes DOJ Public Protection Unit During National Consumer Protection Week**

MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul is proudly joining government and nonprofit organizations around the country in celebrating the 24<sup>th</sup> annual National Consumer Protection Week which runs from March 6 – March 12, 2022. The Wisconsin Department of Justice’s (DOJ) Division of Legal Services (DLS) Public Protection Unit (PPU) enforces the state’s consumer protection laws which prohibit unfair and deceptive business practices in a wide variety of areas.

“The Public Protection Unit at DOJ works hard to protect Wisconsinites from scammers and others who attempt to profit at the expense of others by making false or deceptive claims,” said Attorney General Josh Kaul. “Thank you to our team in the Public Protection Unit for fighting for consumers in Wisconsin.”

Recent notable cases that PPU has taken on are below:

#### **\$26 Billion Opioid Agreement with Drug Distributors and Johnson & Johnson**

Final approval has been reached in the \$26 billion Opioid agreement with the nation’s three major pharmaceutical distributors – Cardinal, McKesson, and AmerisourceBergen – and Johnson & Johnson. The agreement marks the culmination of three years of negotiations to resolve more than 4,000 claims of state and local governments across the country. It is the second largest multistate agreement in U.S. history, second only to the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement. All 87 of Wisconsin’s litigating political subdivisions have signed on to the agreement,

and Wisconsin will receive its full share of over \$400 million with the first payments to be made in April 2022. Learn more [here](#).

### **\$1.85 Billion Settlement with Student Loan Servicer Navient**

Navient, known as one of the nation's largest student loan servicers, will provide relief totaling \$1.85 billion to resolve allegations of widespread unfair and deceptive student loan servicing practices and abuses in originating predatory student loans. This settlement resolves claims that since 2009, despite representing that it would help borrowers find the best repayment options for them, Navient steered struggling student loan borrowers into costly long-term forbearances instead of counseling them about the benefits of more affordable income-driven repayment plans. Wisconsin will receive a total of \$1,110,265 in restitution payments for more than 4,165 federal loan borrowers. Additionally, 953 borrowers will receive a total of \$22,776,612 in private loan debt cancellation. Learn more [here](#).

### **Lawsuit Alleging Milwaukee Landlord Joe Berrada Violated Wisconsin Landlord-Tenant Law**

DOJ filed a civil law enforcement action against Youssef (Joe) Berrada and his property management company, Berrada Properties Management, Inc. The complaint alleges that Mr. Berrada and Berrada Properties Management, Inc., violated Wisconsin landlord-tenant law by including illegal provisions in leases, illegally charging tenants late rent fees and court fees, and engaging in illegal security deposit deduction practices. The complaint also alleges that Defendants engaged in several illegal practices while remodeling newly acquired buildings with existing tenants, including: forcing tenants out of their apartment, throwing away tenant property, and entering apartments at unreasonable times and without proper notice. Learn more [here](#).

### **Multijurisdictional enforcement Action to Stop \$68 Million Precious Metals Scheme that Targeted the Elderly**

Wisconsin joined a multijurisdictional, coordinated enforcement action to stop a fraudulent precious metals scheme that resulted in investments exceeding \$68 million from at least 450 investors nationwide. The group filed a complaint in the United States District Court for the Central District of California alleging Safeguard Metals, LLC and Jeffrey Santulan, a/k/a Jeffrey Hill solicited investors nationwide by touting precious metals at grossly inflated prices that were not disclosed. The defendants are accused of failing to disclose the markup charge for their precious metals bullion products and that investors could lose the majority of their funds once a transaction was completed. In Wisconsin, 17 investors were defrauded out of

\$1,880,599 in the execution of this national scheme. Many Wisconsin investors liquidated their existing retirement accounts, which contained securities, to obtain funds to purchase the metals. Learn more [here](#).

### **DOJ Helps Distribute Nearly \$500,000 in Charity Contributions After Shutdown of Deceptive Charity Telefunding Operation**

DOJ helped shutter a massive telefunding operation. Associated Community Services (ACS) and a number of related defendants who made deceptive fundraising calls agreed to settle allegations that they duped generous Americans into donating to charities that failed to provide the services they promised. In Wisconsin, nearly 43 million fraudulent calls were made between January of 2016 and August of 2019. Of those calls, there were 1.6 million unique numbers, meaning that many of the calls were made repeatedly to the same phone numbers. Through the court action, the defendants paid almost \$500,000 to the states to be distributed to court-approved nonprofits for the charitable purposes donors originally intended to support. Learn more [here](#).

Wisconsin is unique in that consumer protection functions are championed by many different state agencies. DOJ's Public Protection Unit enforces the laws that protect consumers and our natural resources. DOJ also works closely with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection, the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions, and other agencies to investigate and prosecute violations of these laws.