

Consumer Alert

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Office of Consumer Affairs Warns Consumers to Beware of Out-of-State Telemarketing Calls

Residents should use caution when answering calls from telemarketers. An out-of-state company is calling into Ohio selling a five-year subscription service plan and telephone device which claims to protect consumers from identity theft.

Recently a Summit County senior received such a call, resulting in a charge of \$399.99 for these services she did not authorize. The consumer contacted the company after noticing the amount on her bank statement but received no results. She then contacted her bank to dispute the charge with them and filed a complaint with our office to alert other consumers.

"Stopping the telemarketers is the first step you can take to avoid unwanted calls that may result in unexpected charges to your bank or credit card accounts," said Cynthia Sich, Director of the Office of Consumer Affairs. "Signing up on the National Do Not Call Registry is one of the best protections you can take against telemarketing fraud and it costs nothing to join."

Consumers can also protect themselves by carefully reviewing their bills and account statements every month. If you find charges you did not authorize, contact your bank or credit card company immediately to dispute the charge and follow-up in writing with your credit card company within 60 days of the initial bill. **Never** give your account numbers or social security number over the telephone unless you know the company and understand why the information is needed.

For information on how to avoid identity theft, visit the Federal Trade Commission's web site at www.ftc.gov/idtheft. To sign up on the National Do Not Call Registry call their toll-free telephone number at 888-382-1222 or register online at <https://www.donotcall.gov/>.

If you have been charged for services or products not ordered or authorized, contact the Office of Consumer Affairs at (330) 643-2879 or visit our website at www.co.summit.oh.us/conaffairs.htm and file a complaint.