



# NEWS RELEASE

## HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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### **Police issue warning about recent telephone scam** *Caller claiming to be employee of county Sheriff's Office seeks money*

The Howard County Police Department is investigating recent reports of a telephone scam targeting residents.

In the last few weeks, the department has received nearly 20 reports of incidents in which a scammer attempts to elicit money from a victim by claiming he is a law enforcement official from the Howard County Sheriff's Office.\*

The caller states that a warrant for the victim's arrest has been issued for failing to appear for a grand jury subpoena. He also states that the victim's driver's license will be suspended unless a fine is paid and instructs the victim to pay a fee using a pre-paid debit card in order to be free of the warrant.

Local police and sheriff's officials do not contact individuals via phone to explain that there is legal action against them for any reason. They also will never ask for payment over the phone or offer to negotiate a reduced payment in lieu of arrest.

In at least one recent case, a victim paid the scammer \$900. The department is encouraging residents to take precautions to avoid falling victim to this or similar scams. Police are asking those who have family members, friends or neighbors that may be vulnerable to scams to share this message.

Along with the Howard County Office of Consumer Affairs, HCPD encourages residents to consider the following tips:

- Be wary of unsolicited phone calls;
- Don't allow a caller to threaten or scare you into taking immediate action;
- Refrain from sharing personal or financial information over the phone; and
- Never send money (via wire or pre-paid debit card) to someone you don't know.

Police believe additional incidents may have gone unreported. If you believe you have been the victim of a scam, please call police at (410) 313-2200. If you have information about this particular scam, please call (410) 313-STOP or email HCPDcrimetips@howardcountymd.gov.

To get more information on other types of scams, please visit [www.howardcountymd.gov/consumer](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/consumer).

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*\*Note: The sheriff's office is a separate agency from the police department, providing court security and serving court warrants in Howard County. The police department is investigating because this is a criminal matter.*