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ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN CALLS ON CREDIT BUREAUS TO HALT FEES FOR CONSUMERS IMPACTED BY MASSIVE EQUIFAX BREACH

Madigan & 37 Attorneys General Call on Other Big Consumer Reporting Agencies to Stop Charging Fees to Guard Against Identity Theft

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today joined with 37 other attorneys general to urge credit reporting agencies Experian and TransUnion to immediately stop charging fees to consumers who want to put a credit freeze on their accounts in light of the massive data breach at the consumer reporting agency Equifax.

Madigan and the other attorneys general sent letters today to [Experian](#) and [TransUnion](#) urging them to stop charging fees for credit freezes and fees to lift or temporarily lift credit freezes on consumers' accounts. The Equifax data breach reported last month has so far affected over 145 million Americans.

"Illinois residents are struggling to protect themselves from potential identity theft and are rightly angry that they must pay \$10 to each credit reporting agency to place a credit freeze and another \$10 every time they want to temporarily lift the freeze," Madigan said. "The credit reporting agencies profit by selling consumers' information, and they have a responsibility to protect that same information. They need to allow consumers to freeze their credit without a charge or hassle."

In addition to today's letters, Madigan has initiated House Bill 4095, sponsored by state Rep. Greg Harris, to eliminate credit freeze fees in Illinois. Already, seven states ban or restrict such fees by the credit reporting agencies (CRAs).

Currently, some of the CRAs are offering what they call a credit lock, which is similar to a credit freeze, but in some cases they also charge a monthly fee for the lock and combine it with other services, such as credit monitoring. In other cases, the CRAs offer a credit freeze free of charge, but the terms and conditions indicate that consumers' information will be shared with affiliates and third party marketers. Madigan said those conditions are unacceptable because the goal for consumers is to secure their data – not distribute it any further. Consumers should be able to receive the credit freezes provided for by law without fees and without being subjected to marketing from unknown third parties.

In addition to placing a credit freeze on all of your credit reports, Madigan offered the following tips consumers can take to safeguard against identity theft:

- Regularly request your free credit reports, inspect them closely, and promptly dispute any unauthorized accounts;
- Inspect all financial account statements closely and promptly dispute any unauthorized charges;
- Consider placing alerts on your financial accounts so your financial institution alerts you when money above a pre-designated amount is withdrawn;
- Beware of potential phishing emails; don't open any email messages or attachments from unknown senders and do not click on any unknown links. Fraudsters will frequently send coercive and misleading emails threatening account suspension or worse if sensitive information is not provided. Remember, businesses will never ask customers to verify account information via email. If in doubt, contact the business in question directly for verification and to report phishing emails; and
- Be on the lookout for spoofed email addresses. Spoofed email addresses are those that make minor changes in the domain name, frequently changing the letter O to the number zero, or the lowercase letter l to the number one. Scrutinize all incoming email addresses to ensure that the sender is truly legitimate.

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