



## **NC SEC. OF STATE ELAINE MARSHALL AND GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES PARTNER TO KEEP FAMILIES SAFE WHEN PURCHASING PRESCRIPTIONS ONLINE**

Raleigh, N.C. (May 6, 2020) – As cities and counties across North Carolina continue to stay at home and practice social distancing related to COVID-19, online purchasing has skyrocketed, forcing most of us to purchase everything from groceries to prescription drugs online. The [Center for Safe Internet Pharmacies](#) (CSIP) and NC Secretary of State Elaine F. Marshall today announced the launch of a new online public awareness campaign for [Verify Before You Buy](#). The key feature of the [VerifyBeforeYouBuy.org](#) site is a search tool where consumers can copy and paste in the URL or internet address of an online pharmacy site and find out immediately if it is legitimate. Over 50,000 North Carolina households have used this tool in the past, but it will be even more critical during COVID. CSIP and the N.C. Secretary of State’s partnership began in 2017, the first of its kind with a state government department, and includes a coalition of local health care, business, senior, and other non-profit organizations. The coalition website also provides tools and resources to educate and guide safe purchasing of medications online.

“The companies on our board have been together for 9 years, combating the staggering number of fake online pharmacies that endanger the health and safety of innocent consumers. Families and individuals who are using the Internet to save money or conveniently get their medications,” said CSIP Executive Director Marjorie Clifton. “More than ever, consumers are relying on the Internet to purchase, in some cases, life-saving medications. But, the average consumer is unaware of how common, and how dangerous fake online pharmacies can be.”

According to the National Association of Boards of Pharmacies and the FDA, a staggering 97% of online pharmacies are fake or operating outside of U.S. law. The risk of purchasing from an illegitimate source can be grave – there are cases of consumers buying medication containing lead paint, rat poison, cement or other toxic materials.

“During this COVID-19 crisis when North Carolinians are trying to stay safe at home and buying online, the [Verify Before You Buy](#) tool enables consumers to check the safety of their online pharmacy, resulting in saved lives and protection from financial fraud,” said Secretary

Marshall. “We are thrilled to be partnering with CSIP and to have the support of Twitter, Facebook, Google and Microsoft to get information in the hands of consumers.”

As part of these scams, there is also a prevalence of identity theft, where websites are posing as pharmacies to steal credit card information. U.S. regulators have no way of controlling or certifying that medications are safe if they are not from sites that are licensed. And, counterfeiters have become very skilled in mimicking legitimate pharmacies.

The online public awareness campaign will run through the month of May.

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#### **ABOUT THE CENTER FOR SAFE INTERNET PHARMACIES**

The [Center for Safe Internet Pharmacies](#) (CSIP), a non-profit organization founded in 2011, represents the technology sector and Internet intermediaries. CSIP’s mission is to promote best practices in the technology and commerce industries and educate consumers about safely buying and using medicines and online pharmacies. CSIP’s board members include Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Verizon Media, Twitter, MasterCard, Discover, Amex, Paypal and UPS.

***Editor’s Note: To schedule interviews with Secretary Marshall or Marjorie Clifton call or text Tim Crowley at (919) 999-0995.***