

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Office of the Attorney General

ATTORNEY GENERAL
KARL A. RACINE



Office of Consumer Protection

March 25, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL



RE: Price Gouging

Dear Sir:

The District of Columbia Office of the Attorney General has received one or more complaints that since Mayor Bowser declared a Public Health Emergency, you have raised your prices for certain goods sold on Amazon.com and shipped from [REDACTED] in violation of District laws protecting consumers during natural disasters. Specifically, you have: 1) raised your price for 12 push-style hand sanitizer foam dispensers to \$22.57, although this product generally sells for \$10.56, 2) raised your price for touch-free foam hand sanitizer dispensers to \$55.51, although this product generally sells for \$13.49, 3) raised your price for a case of 24 4-ounce flip-cap bottles of advanced hand sanitizer to \$58.67, although this product generally sells for \$20.98, 4) raised your price for a pack of 6 hand sanitizer refills to \$61.58, although this product generally sells for \$34.52, 5) raised your price for a touch-free automatic soap dispenser to \$104.62, although this product generally sells for \$36.16, 6) raised your price for a pack of 8 advanced hand sanitizer refills to \$106.70, although this product normally sells for \$66.38, and 7) raised your price a dispensing stand for sanitizing wipes to \$614.72, although this product normally sells for \$324.95. On March 11, 2020, Mayor Bowser declared a Public Health Emergency based upon the threatened spread of the Coronavirus. This Declaration triggered certain protections in the District's Natural Disaster Consumer Protection Act, D.C. Code § 28-4101, *et seq.*

This law prohibits merchants from taking advantage of emergencies by increasing the prices for services and merchandise. Concerning merchandise, the law states that merchants may not charge more than “. . . the same percentage over wholesale cost as the retail mark-up for similar

merchandise sold in the Washington Metropolitan Area during the 90-day period that immediately preceded an emergency . . .” D.C. Code § 28-4101(2)(B).

The Attorney General for the District of Columbia (“OAG”), is the chief legal officer for the District of Columbia. Pursuant to D.C. Code § 28-3909, OAG is empowered with broad authority to restrain illegal acts. Pursuant to this Office’s authority you are hereby directed to immediately bring your prices for hand sanitizers, soap dispensers, and dispensing stands in conformity with District law.

Please contact the undersigned within the next twenty-four hours to confirm that you have modified your pricing. If you have information about changes in the wholesale cost of hand sanitizers, soap dispensers, and dispensing stands that you would like us to consider, please provide it within the next twenty-four hours as well. Your failure to comply with this directive may result in further action by this office.

Sincerely,

KARL A. RACINE
Attorney General for the District of Columbia

By: _____s/_____
Wendy J. Weinberg
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Office of Consumer Protection
[REDACTED]
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