

## CHAPTER 388

(Senate Bill 34)

AN ACT to add new Sections 19 to ~~28, 29~~, 27, inclusive, to Article 83 of the Annotated Code of Maryland (1965 Replacement Volume), title "Sales and Notices", to follow immediately after Section 18 thereof, and to be under the new subtitle "Consumer Protection", ~~Office~~, creating a ~~Consumer Protection Office~~ DIVISION OF CONSUMER PROTECTION under the discretion and control of the Attorney General of Maryland and generally providing its functions and powers, GENERALLY RELATING TO CONTROL AND REGULATION OF FRAUD AND FALSE ADVERTISING TO CONSUMERS and providing for certain civil and criminal liabilities for persons violating the provisions of this Act.

WHEREAS, there has been mounting concern over the increased incidences of deceptive practices in connection with the sales of goods and services in the State of Maryland; and

WHEREAS, certain merchants unfairly take advantage of an unsuspecting public and thereby reap an undeserved profit; and

WHEREAS, such practices undermine the public confidence in those supplying consumer goods and services, while actually a majority of these businessmen operate with integrity and sincere regard for their customers; and

WHEREAS, the people of Maryland should be protected from the practices of a small minority of unscrupulous individuals and to rid the State of the individuals would work to the advantage of the honest businessmen of the State by raising public confidence in the business community, therefore

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Maryland,* That new Sections 19 to ~~28, 29~~, 27, inclusive, be and they are hereby added to Article 83 of the Annotated Code of Maryland (1965 Replacement Volume), title "Sales and Notices", to follow immediately after Section 18 thereof and to be under the new subtitle "Consumer Protection", ~~Office~~, and to read as follows:

*Consumer Protection Office*

19.

(a) *There shall be created under the authority of the Attorney General of Maryland, a ~~Consumer Protection Office~~ DIVISION OF CONSUMER PROTECTION for the purposes as set forth under the provisions of this Act.* SUBTITLE.

20.

(a) *Definitions.*

(1) *The term "advertisement" means the publication, dissemination, or circulation of any matter, oral or written, INCLUDING LABELING, which tends to induce, directly or indirectly, any person to enter into any obligation, sign any contract, or acquire any title or interest in any merchandise or service. AND INCLUDES EVERY WORD DEVICE TO DISGUISE ANY FORM OF BUSINESS SOLICITATION BY USING SUCH TERMS AS "RENEWAL,"*