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# Secretary of State's Office Warns of New Scam Targeting TN Businesses

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - Secretary of State Ire Hargett is warning Tennessee business owners about a new scam targeting businesses with a deceptive mailer from a company called Business Document Center incorrectly implying that businesses need a Certificate of Good Standing. "Unfortunately, our Division of Business and Charitable Organizations and I were recently made aware of yet another company sending out misleading mailers trying to take advantage of Tennessee business owners," said Secretary Hargett. "These mailers imply that businesses must have a Certificate of Good Standing to operate in Tennessee. A Certificate of Good Standing is not even something that our office offers. What is called a Certificate of Good Standing in some other states is a Certificate of Existence in Tennessee, and neither are necessary to do business in our great state." This most recent mailer, titled 2022 Certificate of Status Request Form, tries to get Tennessee business owners to pay \$87.25 for the Business Document Center to request a Certificate of Good Standing on their behalf. A Certificate of Good Standing is not a document available from the Secretary of State's office. The fee the Business Document Center is charging is four times more than the Secretary of State's office charges for an equivalent document offered, a Certificate of Existence.

The mailer and the Business Document Center are not affiliated with or authorized by the Secretary of State's Office in any way. "I encourage Tennessee business owners to be wary of any mailings they get from third-party companies that say they will work with my office on your behalf," said Secretary Hargett. "These scammers are charging excessive amounts for something that many businesses will never need and if they did do, can be easily obtained for only \$20 through our office." Businesses may wish to obtain a Certificate of Existence in certain circumstances, such as a loan closing or other business transaction. However, they are not required to do so to form a new business or to conduct business. Businesses that want a Certificate of Existence can quickly and easily request one directly from the Secretary of State's office for just \$20 by phone at 615-741-2286, mail or online at tnbear.tn.gov/Ecommerce/CertOfExistenceInstr.aspx. Secretary Hargett encourages business owners who receive a suspicious mailer about a Certificate of Good Standing or a Certificate of Existence to report it to the Division of Business and Charitable Organizations by phone 615-741-2286 or email TNSOS.CERT@tn.gov.

