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**ATTORNEY GENERAL CUOMO & NYC CONSUMER AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER
MINTZ SECURE FULL RESTITUTION FOR HUNDREDS OF NEW YORKERS
BILKED BY BOGUS TRIPS**

***Queens-Based Biss Tours Failed to Give Nearly \$350,000 in Refunds to More
Than 1,000 Consumers Who Had Prepaid for Over 2,000 Reservations***

Attorney General Andrew M. Cuomo and New York City Department of Consumer Affairs Commissioner Jonathan B. Mintz today announced a settlement with Queens-based Biss Tours, Inc. ("Biss") which refused to refund customers who prepaid for trips that were cancelled. Under the settlement, the bus tour company will fully refund all consumers.

In August 2007, Biss cancelled and recalled over 2,000 prepaid tour reservations without notice. The company then failed to give nearly \$350,000 in refunds to more than 1,000 affected consumers. A joint effort by the Attorney General's office and the City's Department of Consumer Affairs ("DCA") was spurred by more than 100 complaints filed with DCA and 50 complaints filed with the Attorney General's office and the Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan New York ("BBB").

Attorney General Cuomo said, "This settlement shows that companies cannot leave their customers in the dust and expect to get away with it in New York State. My office will continue to hold companies accountable for the promises they make to their customers."

"These hard-working New Yorkers who saved and paid for vacations deserve their money back and we're pleased to have been able to get it for them," said Consumer Affairs Commissioner Mintz. "Our Department is proud to bring cases like these to our consumer protection partners to help as many consumers as we can. We urge any New Yorker who ever finds themselves in a similar position to contact us so we can help."

"The Better Business Bureau is pleased with the outcome of this matter and is happy to work with the Department of Consumer Affairs and the Attorney General to help consumers regain what they lost. This action goes a long way towards rebuilding consumer confidence and trust in business," said Claire Rosenzweig, President and CEO of the BBB Serving Metropolitan New York.

Biss Tours coordinated North American bus excursions for consumers in the New York City area by chartering private, third-party buses for tours. In late August 2007, Biss stopped making advance payments to its bus provider, and the provider cut off its supply of tour buses. Biss subsequently went out of business and cancelled all tours, including some that were already mid-trip.

The Attorney General's office and Department of Consumer Affairs have identified affected consumers and are working through the BBB to distribute the refunds. The exact amount of restitution will be determined after affected consumers make claims

for refunds. Some customers have already received restitution from their credit card company, traveler's insurance, or a similar source.

Customers of Biss Tours who have questions about the administration of refunds can call the BBB at phone line dedicated to the Biss Restitution Fund: (212) 358-2857.

This matter was handled at the Department of Consumer Affairs by Deputy Director for Research and Investigations Dawn Yuster, Director for Research and Investigations Karuna Patel and General Counsel Marla Tepper. At the Attorney General's office, it was handled by Assistant Attorney General Melvin Goldberg, Consumer Mediation Section Chief Andy Lugo, and Associate Auditor Percy Corcoran, under the supervision of Chief of the Consumer Frauds Bureau Joy Feigenbaum.

DCA enforces the Consumer Protection Law and other related business laws throughout New York City. Ensuring a fair and vibrant marketplace for consumers and businesses alike, DCA licenses more than 60,000 businesses in 55 different categories. Through targeted outreach, partnerships with community and trade organizations, and informational materials, DCA educates consumers and businesses about their rights and responsibilities. For more information, call 311 or visit DCA online at www.nyc.gov/consumers.

Planning a vacation? Follow these tips:

- **Book your trip with a reputable vendor.** Contact your local consumer protection agency, such as the New York State Attorney General or the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs, to check if the travel business has a history of complaints. New York City residents should call 311 to check the complaint status of any business.
- **Double check all the details.** Be sure to confirm all the details of your trip, especially when vacations are booked through a third party travel agency. After you have all the contact information for your trip – such as charter buses, rental car companies, hotels and airlines – make sure you verify the arrangements yourself.
- **Get everything in writing.** Get all the details of your trip in writing, including cancellation fees and the businesses' refund policy. Consider travel insurance for added protection.
- **Pay with a credit card.** Many credit card companies can provide customers with refunds when there is a dispute about the services delivered. However, you should only provide trusted businesses your credit card information.

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