PRESS RELEASE

March 20, 2020
For Immediate Release

RE: Sangamon County State’s Attorney Announces Strict Enforcement of Criminal Penalties for False Reporting Related to the COVID-19 Virus and Non-Compliance with Public Health Orders; Cooperation Between Local Prosecutors and the Illinois Attorney General’s Office to Fight Price Gouging and Fraud

Sangamon County State’s Attorney Dan Wright announced today that his office will strictly enforce criminal penalties for the knowing or malicious dissemination of false information concerning the COVID-19 virus or refusal to comply with any isolation, quarantine or closure order issued by local public health authorities.

Under Illinois law, any conviction of such offenses is a Class A misdemeanor subject to jail time of up to 364 days and potential fine of $2,500.00. In certain circumstances, knowingly false reports which result in an emergency response by any public safety agency may be charged as Disorderly Conduct, a Class 4 felony, eligible for a sentence of between 1-3 years in prison and a fine of up to $25,000. Penalties also include reimbursement of the public agency for the reasonable costs of the emergency response by
the public agency up to $10,000. Citizens are also reminded that the Governor’s March 20, 2020 Executive Order in Response to COVID-19 (Executive Order 2020-10) may be enforced by State and local law enforcement pursuant to the Illinois Emergency Management Agency Act, 20 ILCS 3305.

“In this unprecedented public health crisis, knowingly false or malicious reports to public health officials or law enforcement regarding the COVID-19 virus will not be tolerated” Wright said. Additionally, Wright stated that “the Sangamon County State’s Attorney’s Office is committed to supporting the enforcement efforts of the Illinois Attorney General’s Office to crack down on price gouging and fraudulent schemes designed to take advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic.”