A Taxing Situation
Derived From an ACM Self-Assessment Procedures Scenario

Jason Henderson is a software engineer for a large software development company. The company has decided to enter the market for Tax Preparation Software. It is producing a new software package that incorporates the tax laws and figures taxes for both individuals and small businesses. Jason has been assigned to work on the project.

Jason is proud of his work on the system; his focus has been on user testing, and he is confident that the system will be understood by the users. But he knows from these tests that the system still has some significant bugs, and he is concerned that some of these bugs will lead users to file incorrect tax returns.

Jason has informed his superiors of the problems he has observed. The president of the company knows about the problems. He also believes that the first firm to put this kind of software on the market is likely to capture the largest market share. The company widely advertises the program. The company decides that when it actually ships, it will include a disclaimer of responsibility for errors resulting from use of the program. The company expects it will receive a certain number of complaints, queries, and suggestions for modification. The company plans to use these to make changes and eventually issue updated, improved, and debugged versions. The president argues that this is general industry policy and that anyone who buys version 1.0 of a program knows this and will take proper precautions.

Write a two page evaluate of Jason’s situation. What are the concerns? Provide specific points from the Software Engineering Code of Ethics that are relevant to this situation. What options might he consider? What is your recommendation?