

Scams Against Older Adults Advisory Group Meeting | FTC | September 29, 2022

Lois Greisman:

Hello, and welcome to the first meeting of the Scams Against Older Adults Advisory Group. I'm Lois Greisman, I'm the FTC's Elder Justice Coordinator, and I look forward to telling you more about the work that this group will tackle in the upcoming year. First, though, I'd like to introduce Sam Levine, the Director of the Federal Trade Commission's Bureau of Consumer Protection. Director Levine will give an overview of the FTC's efforts to protect older adults, and he will share the purpose behind convening this advisory group. Next slide, please, and Sam, if you would.

Samuel Levine:

Thank you, Lois. I'm excited to be with all of you today to help launch the Scams Against Older Adults Advisory Group. Combating scams that affect older adults is one of the FTC's top priorities. Over the years we have aggressively attacked these scams from multiple angles, using every tool at our disposal. Our law enforcement actions have both shut down fraud and returned money to consumers whenever possible. In 2021 alone the FTC returned more than \$400 million to people affected by cases that were filed as a result of FTC law enforcement efforts.

Samuel Levine:

To further these efforts, the FTC has embarked on a number of rule makings on topics that disproportionately affect older adults. For example, the commission recently proposed a rule to address government and business impersonator frauds. If, like me, you've gotten these calls, texts, or emails from the IRS, or FEMA, or Amazon, or FedEx, or even the FTC, you know that these scammers pretend to work for a government agency or a well known business. Their aim is simple, to trick you into giving them your money or your personal information. And, according to our data, older adults report tremendous losses to these kinds of frauds. In 2021 that amounted to \$151 million in reported losses to business impersonators, and a further \$122 million to government impersonators.

Samuel Levine:

Our proposed rule would allow the FTC to recover money from, or seek civil penalties against, impersonators who violate the rule and harm consumers. These rule makings are especially important in light of the Supreme Court's decision in AMG Capital Management, which has hamstrung the FTC's ability to return funds to consumers under its existing authority. But everyone here today knows that law enforcement is simply not enough, even as all of us work harder and smarter against the scammers who would target older adults.

Samuel Levine:

An essential part of successful fraud fighting is education, helping older consumers know how to spot, avoid and report scams. That's why at the FTC we've invested heavily in our Pass It On education campaign, which we print and distribute in both English and Spanish. This campaign honors the life experience of older adults and asks them to pass on what they know, while sharing advice on spotting the scams to get the conversation started. From prize scams to impersonators, from health insurance scams to identity theft, Pass It On covers some of the scams that most affect older adults.

Samuel Levine:

The many millions of materials distributed tell us that there's power in treating people as an authority on the scams that they've experienced, just as there's power in the outreach that communities have developed around sharing Pass It On, outreach through libraries, local police departments, credit unions, legal services providers, and the Aging Network. Education without outreach is just words on a page or a screen, so we work hard with these partners, and through our Every Community initiative, to get these in other consumer education messages in the hands of people who need them, in a way they know that messages for them, and delivered by someone in the community they trust, which may or may not be the Federal Trade Commission.

Samuel Levine:

Along with law enforcement, education, and outreach, the FTC conducts research and analyzes the fraud reports we receive from older adults. By identifying fraud trends, this research helps inform our law enforcement and policy priorities, and helps us direct our limited resources to efforts that benefit consumers the most. Each October we summarize those efforts for older adults in an annual report to Congress. This year's report highlights the efforts discussed today and references over 40 cases that we brought in the last year that affect older adults. And although this is a long term priority, and many of us have been doing this work for many years, we are not set in our ways. Our BCP team is always looking for new and innovative ways to help prevent scams from affecting older adults. That is why I am pleased to announce two initiatives today, both stemming from the Stop Senior Scams Act passed by Congress earlier the spring. Next slide please.

Samuel Levine:

First, the FTC is creating the Senior Fraud Advisory Office, housed in the FTC's Division of Consumer Response and Operations. The office will be led by Patti Poss, our newly appointed Senior Fraud Advisory Office Coordinator. As outlined in the Stop Senior Scams Act, this newly created office will advise the Commission on Fraud Prevention Strategies, monitor the market for emerging fraud trends impacting older adults, and coordinate with our law enforcement partners to disseminate consumer education on these new trends. A key role of this office will be building on the research and analysis that the agency has already conducted about how fraud affects older adults. For example, as detailed in our report to Congress, 2021 fraud reports to the FTC show several key trends. Next slide please.

Samuel Levine:

First, as you can see, older adults report higher median individual losses than younger consumers, and those losses were higher in 2021 than they were the year before, highlighting the need for continued efforts like this one to prevent scams from affecting older adults. Next slide please. Second, when older adults reported losing money to fraud they give gift cards as the most common payment method, but their reported losses were higher when paying through a bank-

Speaker 1:

I've transitioned back to the holding slide, looks like Sam is frozen for me. Just want to confirm if we could get Sam to rejoin.

Patricia Hsue:

He's rejoining.

Samuel Levine:

Hi everyone, can you hear me? I'm very sorry that the screen froze, I think it underscores why it would be nice to convene this meeting in person, but it's nice to be back with all of you gorgeous people.

Speaker 1:

So Sam, I'm on a holding slide right now, so what I'm going to do is I'm going to count you back in.

Samuel Levine:

Okay.

Speaker 1:

Excellent, so you'll be back live again in 3, 2, 1. You are live.

Samuel Levine:

Thank you, and I'm sorry that my computer froze and I got disconnected. If we could please go to the next slide.

Samuel Levine:

FTC data tells us that older adults report greater aggregate losses to online frauds, particularly frauds that start through social media, but scam calls are still a problem for older adults. Reports from people 60 and older show a higher median individual loss when the scammer initiated contact by phone. Understanding how scammers contact and eventually get money from older adults is crucial to identifying and implementing strategies to combat these scams.

Samuel Levine:

That is exactly the kind of analysis that the Senior Fraud Advisory Office will use, not just to direct the FTC's ongoing work to protect older adults, but also to inform the work of the Scams Against Older Adults Advisory Group convened here today. This advisory group is the second initiative of the Stop Senior Scams Act. It is comprised of a cross section of stakeholders, including representatives from government, industry, and consumer advocacy groups. This new coalition will design and implement new ways to reduce the impact of fraud on older adults. Next slide please.

Samuel Levine:

To spearhead this work at the FTC, we have formed a team of outstanding leaders from three divisions in the Bureau of Consumer Protection, who of course represented extensive work by others in the bureau and our regional offices throughout the country. These team members include Jennifer Leach, Karen Hobbs, and Christina Miranda for the Division of Consumer and Business Education, Maria Mayo, Patti Poss, and Emma Fletcher for the Division of Consumer Response and Operations. And Lois Greisman, Kati Daffan, and Patricia Hsue for the Division of Marketing Practices. I'd like to thank Senators Casey, Moran, Scott, and Kelly, and Representative Blunt Rochester, for sponsoring the Stop Senior Scams Act, and providing us with the vehicle to harness innovation and expand in our efforts to stop scams that affect older adults.

Samuel Levine:

Now, I'd like to invite our Stop Senior Scams Act coordinator, Patricia Hsue, to introduce the members of the advisory group. Next slide please.

Patricia Hsue:

Thanks so much, Sam. I am honored to help introduce the members of this newly formed group. Each of the members brings a wealth of experience to the table, and I look forward to working with all of you on this important initiative. At this time I'd like to invite the representative for AARP to introduce themselves. Next slide.

Jilene Gunther:

Thank you. My name is Jilene Gunther and I'm incredibly grateful to be included in this very impressive group, and also represent AARP and the interest of older consumers. AARP is the nation's largest non-profit nonpartisan organization, we look at empowering Americans age 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. We have a diverse membership of nearly 38 million people who benefit from our programs, services, advocacy, all aimed at bettering the lives of older Americans.

Jilene Gunther:

With that, consumer protection is often at the core of what we do here at AARP. We create game changing consumer education and empowerment program such as Fraud Watch Network. Through our Bank Safe initiative we also create industry interventions, tools, and trainings that help banks, credit unions, financial advisors, retailers, and other financial organizations to prevent fraud by empowering them to spot and stop it before the criminals get the money. To date we've helped save an estimated 200 million on behalf of consumers. Education and industry collaboration is why our interventions and training work so well, and I'm very encouraged by this committee's mission to incorporate this collaborative model into its work, and I look forward to working with all of you. Thank you.

Patricia Hsue:

Thanks so much, Jilene. Next I'd like to invite the representative for AmeriCorps to introduce themselves.

Atalaya Sergi:

Thank you, Patricia. I am Atalaya Sergi, Director of AmeriCorps Seniors, and I'm honored to be here with you and represent AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps is the federal agency that provides grants to national and local nonprofits, tribal nations, faith-based organizations, and other entities, to engage individuals of all ages as volunteers. These volunteers use their service to address an array of critical issues in their communities.

Atalaya Sergi:

AmeriCorps Seniors is one of the oldest programs at AmeriCorps and is solely focused on engaging older adults, 55 years of age and older, in national service. It is comprised of three different programs, engaging about 150,000 older adults annually. The Foster Grandparent Program is our intergenerational program, where older adults support children and youth in their academic and social emotional development. The Senior Companion Program, our peer-to-peer program, where older adults support other older adults and those with disabilities to live independently and to reduce social isolation. And

RSVP, where older adult volunteers are engaged in a myriad of activities, including educating others about scams in their communities.

Atalaya Sergi:

I'm excited about AmeriCorps seniors being a part of this advisory group. I serve older adults that have the potential to become scam victims, but they also possess the power to educate other elders on how not to become victims. My grantees, volunteers, are well established in their communities as friends and neighbors of the people they serve. They serve many who are isolated and who may not have others nearby to support them or warn them about scams. The community connection AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers have makes them trusted resources who can provide peer-to-peer support, a strategy that has been proven highly effective in numerous older adult interventions and education efforts.

Atalaya Sergi:

As part of the Elder Justice Coordinating Commute Council, we're already engaged in some of this work, and as a social worker with 20 years of experience working on behalf of marginalized people and communities, and seeking to make sure that people of all ages

Atalaya Sergi:

Ages thrive. I look forward to working with you to develop strategies, networks, resources and recommendations that can help prevent or completely stop the scams perpetrated against our elders in this country. And I thank you so much for this opportunity.

Patricia Hsue:

Thanks so much, Atalaya. Now I'd like to invite the representative for Chamber of Digital Commerce to introduce themselves.

Perianne Boring:

Thanks Patricia. And I'd like to just start as a fifth generation native Floridian to express my deepest condolences for all the families who have lost loved ones in Hurricane Ian last night. Florida does have a large population of seniors as well, so certainly our thoughts are with all those impacted by the storm. My name's Perianne Boring and I am the founder and the CEO of the Chamber of Digital Commerce. We are the industry's first and largest trade association that represents the digital asset and blockchain technology industry. We are very excited to be a part of this advisory group and to help policy makers and our regulators understand the unique features of blockchain technology. Ensure that we have programs underway to educate consumers of all types about how to navigate this technology ecosystem safely.

Patricia Hsue:

Thanks so much, Perianne. Now I'd like to invite the representative for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission to introduce themselves.

JonMarc Buffa:

Thank you, Patty. I'm JonMarc Buffa. I lead our Office of Cooperative Enforcement at the CFTC. I have to give you my, I'm a federal employee, so let's give you my disclaimer that these are my opinions and my opinions only. I don't speak for the commission. But the CFTC is the federal regulator of derivatives, so

futures, options, and swaps. We also have anti fraud and anti manipulation jurisdiction over certain spot transactions. The CFTC is committed to rooting out elder fraud in our markets.

JonMarc Buffa:

In the last two years, we've brought numerous cases where we've litigated against individuals who targeted elderly individuals, retirement age people and defrauded them. We're seeing lots of frauds in three areas, precious metals frauds, romance scams and fee scams. We work closely with our partners at the federal and state level, both civil and criminal to bring these wrong doers to justice and the CFTC looks forward to participating in this committee to do what we can to hopefully prevent fraud on the front end, but also to let everyone know that we're committed, that when we identify frauds targeting elderly or older Americans, that the commission is going to continue to bring cases in this space to try to protect elder Americans. Thank you.

Patricia Hsue:

Thanks so much, JonMarc. Now I'd like to the representative for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to introduce themselves.

Deborah Royster:

Thank you, Patty, and good afternoon everyone. My name is Deborah Royster and I am the Assistant Director for the Office for Older Americans at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. We are very pleased to join the Stop Senior Scams Advisory Group. As you may know, the DODD Frank Act created the Office for Older Americans with the aim of protection from unfair deceptive and abusive practices related to older adults financial choices. So the work of a Stop Senior Scams advisory group fits very squarely within the mission of the Office for Older Americans. Currently we have several initiatives that are aimed at stopping senior scams, including three that I will briefly highlight. First, Money Smart for Older Adults is a scam awareness program we developed in collaboration with the FDIC. The program is a plug and play program so that bank staff and advocates can teach the Money Smart course to older adults in the community to help them identify and respond to scams. Money Smart was recently expanded to include our managing someone else's money guides for financial caregivers as well as our fraud prevention place mats. And you can find these resources at consumerfinance.gov/moneysmart.

Deborah Royster:

Second, our elder fraud prevention and response networks are networks of professionals who collaborate to protect older adults from elder financial exploitation. The networks often include representatives from law enforcement, adult protective services, financial institutions, victim services, legal aid, and other key partners. Our Elder Fraud Prevention and Response Network development guide helps people create or strengthen networks in their communities.

Deborah Royster:

Finally, our Elder Financial Exploitation Report was just released yesterday. This report entitled Recovery from Elder Financial Exploitation: a Framework for Policy and Research outlines the stages of recovery from elder financial exploitation and it also discusses reasons why some older adults are more likely to get their money back than others. The report also identifies areas of work and policy and research and practices that can help us better understand how to improve the likelihood of recovery.

Deborah Royster:

All of these resources are available on our website at ConsumerFinance.gov/OlderAmericans. We are very excited to work with our federal partners to expand on these efforts and to continue joint initiatives to find new and better ways to prevent scams affecting older adults and to help people recover money when they lose it to scams. We look forward to working with all of you on this very important issue. Thank you very much.

Patricia Hsue:

Thanks so much, Deborah. Now I'd like to invite the representative for the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation to introduce themselves.

Emerson Hall:

Thank you, Patricia, and good afternoon everyone. I'm Emerson Hall Associate Director of Community Affairs at the FDIC. We would like to thank the FTC Chairman Khan for the invitation to join this advisory group as well as Samuel Levine and Lloyd [inaudible 00:21:34] and the many others at FDIC leading this important work. The FDIC works to ensure stability and public confidence in our nation's financial system. Financial education is a key strategy for how we do that and it plays an important role in our efforts to create a more inclusive banking system. For 21 years, the FDIC's Money Smart Financial Education Program has offered high quality free financial education resources for banks, community based organizations and other stakeholders to educate and protect consumers and communities. Money smart resources are designed to help provide practical guidance on how to become a better user of financial services, make informed financial decisions, and have a positive banking relationship and protect against financial scams and fraud.

Emerson Hall:

Of particular, relevance to this advisory of group's work is a money smart for older adults product developed as Deborah just shared jointly with a CFTB. Money Smart for Older Adults raises awareness among older adults and their caregivers on how to prevent elder financial exploitation while also encouraging advanced planning and informed financial decision making. It is commonly used to assist older adults enhancing and promoting money smart for older adults.

Emerson Hall:

In fact, in 2019 the product received the Gloria Cavanaugh Award for Excellence in Education by the American Society on Aging and recognition of the impact made with over one million copies of the product distributed who have done work to use the curriculum as a vehicle to foster bank law enforcement collaborations to stop elder financial abuse. We look forward to sharing more with you as the work of this advisory group gets underway. We are very pleased be joining our fellow members of this advisory group in addressing the growing prevalence of scams of older adults. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions and thank you for your attention this afternoon.

Patricia Hsue:

Thank you so much, Emerson. Now I'd like to invite the representative for the Federal Reserve Board to introduce themselves.

Patricia Hsue:

Okay. Maybe why not invite the representative for the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network to introduce themselves? Can I have the next slide please?

Rachel Borra:

Yes. Hi, good afternoon. My name is Rachel Borra. I am the director of the Office of Strategic Policy at the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network. I'm honored to be representing FCEN on this advisory group and serve alongside others in tackling a very important and concerning issue. FCEN's mission as a bureau of the US Department of the Treasury is to safeguard the financial system from illicit use, combat money laundering and its related crimes, including terrorism and promote national security through the strategic use of financial authorities and the collection, analysis and dissemination of financial intelligence. In light of this mission and as the administrator and enforcer of the Bank Secrecy Act, FCEN has long recognized the illicit finance threats facing older adults and has issued several publications over the years calling attention to these threats. Beginning with our first advisory to financial institutions on elder financial exploitation, which was issued in 2011. Our publications aim to arm financial institutions with the information they need to identify and report suspicious activity.

Rachel Borra:

Most recently in 2022, FCEN issued its second advisory on Elder Financial Exploitation. We published this advisory on June 15th in support of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and to further sound the alarm over the continuing threat older adults face from those who wish to exploit them for financial gain. The 2022 advisory addressed several of the most pervasive scams currently facing seniors, including government imposter scams, tech customer support scams and romance, emergency and prize lottery scams.

Rachel Borra:

In 2021, FCEN received 72,000 suspicious activity report filings related to elder financial exploitation, which marked an all-time high and was 10,000 more than the prior year with the ever increasing amount of suspicious activity reports filed every year by financial institutions on elder financial exploitation clearly there is still work to be done when it comes to protecting older adults. FCEN is proud to continue our work on this issue through the Advisory Group as we seek to find solutions to mitigate this pervasive issue impacting far too many individuals and ultimately families across the country. Thank you.

Patricia Hsue:

Thanks so much, Rachel. Can we try going to the previous slide for the Federal Reserve Board again. And Angelyque, if you would like to introduce the Federal Reserve Board.

Angelyque Campbell:

Can you hear me now? Can you hear me?

Patricia Hsue:

Yes, we can hear you.

Angelyque Campbell:

I don't know what happened here. My apologies. Let's try this again. Thank you again. Good afternoon. I'm Angelyque Campbell, Assistant Director and Division of Consumer Affairs of Federal. Again, on behalf of the board, I'm pleased be part of this important advisory group focused on stopping scams against older adults and appreciate the FTC coordinating this effort. In fact, years ago, the Federal Reserve released support on the financial experience over does so. We [inaudible 00:28:02] the returning to familiar ground. At the board, the consumer and community affairs division specifically carries out the Federal Reserves consumer protection and community development responsibilities in the interest of helping to ensure the financial marketplace that many engage with, it's fair and transparent and that would most certainly include older adults.

Angelyque Campbell:

To support this goal, the Federal Reserve gathers insight about the financial experiences of consumers through its surveys to notably the Survey of Consumer Finances and the survey of consult economics decision making, which specifically measures the economic wellbeing of US household by a range of demographic factors, including age and identifies potential risk to [inaudible 00:28:50]. The Federal Reserve also supports the goal of a fair and transparent marketplace through its supervision and enforcement of consumer protection laws and right regulation. And last minute note, the Federal Reserve Consumer Help site is an online resource for consumers to find information on an array of financial topics, including fraud and scams, a section of the site that offers tips on recognizing, avoiding and reported stamps. All of these resources can be found on our website at www.federalreserve.gov. We look forward to bringing our information and insight to this advisory group and protection [inaudible 00:29:39]. And thank you again for this.

Patricia Hsue:

Thanks so much, Angelyque. Can we...

Angelyque Campbell:

Thank you.

Patricia Hsue:

I'd like to invite the representative for the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority to introduce themselves.

Jilene Gunther:

Thank you so much. My name is Gerri Walsh and it is an honor to be representing FINRA and the FINRA Investor Education Foundation

Jilene Gunther:

Foundation on this advisory group. FINRA is a not-for-profit self-regulatory organization that supports the Securities and Exchange Commission in overseeing one critical component of the securities markets, the broker dealers, and their associated persons who sell stocks, bonds, mutual funds, and other investments to the public. We carry out our mission of investor protection and market integrity by writing rules that supplement the rules of the Securities and Exchange Commission, examining member firms for compliance with those rules, surveilling the markets using advanced data analytics and

oversight, and taking enforcement action when wrongdoing occurs. A great deal of FINRA's work focuses on helping vulnerable and older investors avoid costly mistakes and have access to advice that they can trust. We do that through our securities helpline for seniors, through rules like our pause and hold on transactions, and the implementation of a requirement that firms seek a trusted contact on customer accounts. And through a variety of other initiatives, including enhanced sanctions when the individual who has been targeted for wrongdoing is an older American.

Jilene Gunther:

Through the foundation, we empower underserved adults to have access to tools and information and resources that can help them achieve financial success throughout their life. And among the many initiatives that we have is our investor protection campaign which engages in outreach with a number of the people who are on this call. So there's a lot of private-public collaboration that happens. But we also engage in robust research initiatives that take a look at what the drivers are of financial fraud, how the cons are able to commit their crimes, but also what makes some consumers more susceptible perhaps than others, to the influences of the persuasion techniques that cons use. We take a look at aging and cognition, the intersection of fraud susceptibility and financial knowledge, and I look forward to sharing these and other insights with the advisory group as you shape the initiative for the coming year. So thank you once again on behalf of FINRA and on behalf of the FINRA Investor Education Foundation.

Patricia Hsue:

Thank you so much, Gerri. Now, I'd like to invite the representative for the Innovative Payments Association to introduce themselves.

Chris Stromberg:

Thank you. Good afternoon everyone. My name is Chris Stromberg and I'm the Head of Government Relations at the Innovative Payments Association, and I'm happy to join this group as a representative of the IPA and our more than 70 members across the financial services industry. The IPA is a trade organization that serves as the leading voice of the electronic payment sector, including prepaid products, mobile wallets, and person-to-person technology for consumers, businesses, and governments at all levels.

Chris Stromberg:

Our goal is to encourage the efficient use of electronic payments, cultivate financial inclusion through educating and empowering consumers, represent the industry before legislative and regulatory bodies, and provide thought leadership. While working towards these goals, we recognize the supreme importance of working across the industry to prevent fraud and scams, particularly those targeted towards older adults. To this end, the IPA and our fraud prevention working group coordinate regularly with law enforcement and develop and implement industry best practices to prevent fraud. We look forward to working with the advisory group and its committees to further this important work. Thank you.

Patricia Hsue:

Thanks so much, Chris. Now, I'd like to invite the representative for the National Retail Federation to introduce themselves.

Stephanie Martz:

Hello. Thank you, Chairwoman Khan. Thank you all of you from the FTC who are on this call for convening us. Following up on the Congress' passage of the Senior Scams Prevention Act, this is something that we care very much about at the National Retail Federation. I'm Stephanie Martz. I'm the Chief Administrative Officer and General Counsel of NRF. We are the world's largest trade association of stores. We represent everyone from the very largest merchants, household names with whom you're all familiar, to small Main Street businesses. And we care very much about the issue of senior scams because we are the front lines interacting with millions of seniors every day. If we don't have the trust of our consumers, including our seniors, we lose in a competitive fashion on many, many fronts. Gift cards in particular are something that our members have been focused on in the last several years as a possible vector for fraud.

Stephanie Martz:

It's a scheme that many, if not everyone on this call in this meeting is very familiar with, in which someone pretending to be a representative from the IRS, pretending to be a grandchild in trouble, contacts a senior and asks for settlement of a debt or payment in the form of gift cards. Our members have, in the past several years, dialed in to this growing problem and have implemented best practices such as caps on the amount of money that you can put on a gift card, the amount of money that you can put on gift cards, plural, in a given transaction, and have also engaged in measures to train their employees to identify frauds.

Stephanie Martz:

Some of our largest members have, in well reported incidents, been able to stop frauds in the amount of several thousands of dollars simply because they have identified people who they suspect are purchasing gift cards, because they have been the subject of a fraud. We're very interested in sharing best practices, in exploring ways that we can identify these horrible actions before they occur, and finding out more about the trends that our members need to be aware of. Thank you so much for having us participate in this important effort.

Patricia Hsue:

Thank you so much, Stephanie. Next, I'd like to invite the representative for the Office of the Attorney General for the State of Vermont to introduce themselves.

Jamie Renner:

Thank you. Thank you to the FTC for convening this group. My name is Jamie Renner. I'm an Assistant Attorney General in the Consumer Protection Unit of the Vermont Attorney General's Office. I also serve as Chair of a national working group that brings together the Attorney General's Offices of 48 states and the District of Columbia to develop and share strategies to protect senior consumers in particular, including in relation to scams, and I'm honored to be here. The Vermont Attorney General's Office takes particular interest in working to address scams that impact older individuals because Vermont is one of the oldest states in the country per capita. A quarter of Vermonters right now are 65 or older, and by 2030 as projected that one-third of Vermonters will be over the age of 60. Moreover, each year, thousands of Vermonters contact my office to report scams.

Jamie Renner:

Each year, scam victims report millions of dollars of losses to my office, and each year it's my office's experience that scams disproportionately impact our state's older population. In response to these scam reports, my colleagues and I are in the trenches day to day advising scam victims, working with banks and the FBI to try to recover scam victim's lost funds, educating the public on scams, educating banks and law enforcement and caregivers on spotting and responding to scams, administering a statewide scam alert system to warn the public of new scams hitting our state, identifying new technologies to block scams, and taking enforcement actions, meaning bringing lawsuits to reduce the number of scams hitting our state.

Jamie Renner:

Recently, for example, a colleague of mine and I sued a California-based telecom company for its role facilitating millions of scam robocalls from overseas into the US and Vermont. We're always looking to improve how we support and protect older Vermonters. We're always looking to help push forward the national conversation around how we best address frauds and scams against older adults generally. So we're eager and honored to be a part of this advisory group and really look forward to collaborating with you all. Thank you.

Patricia Hsue:

Thanks so much, Jamie. Next, I'd like to invite the representative for the Retail Gift Card Association to introduce themselves.

Laura Parker:

Thanks Patty, I really appreciate it. I'm Laura Parker, and I'm Chair of the Retail Gift Card Association. We represent the closed loop gift card industry. Our members represent over a hundred national and large regional retail, restaurant, travel, and entertainment brands. We are committed at promoting and protecting the use of retail gift cards. Members follow a code of principles that promote best practices and help the industry grow and shape and benefit both members and our consumers. During the pandemic, the RGCA created and released a 30 and 60 second PSA educating our consumers on how to avoid gift card scams. We had over 3 million impressions over streaming and national TV. I personally have been involved with the gift card industry for 19 years and have been on the RGCA board since 2018. On behalf of the RGCA, I'm honored to be a part of this advisory board. Thank you very much.

Patricia Hsue:

Thanks, Laura. Next, I'd like to invite the representative for the Securities and Exchange Commission to introduce themselves.

Lori Schock:

Great, thank you. I'm Lori Shock. I'm the Director of the Office of Investor Education and Advocacy at the United States Securities and Exchange Commission. The SEC is the federal regulator for stock market, the people who sell products, as well as the exchanges on which they trade. And our mission is a three part mission, where we facilitate capital formation, maintain fair, orderly, and efficient markets. But overarching on all of that is investor protection. And that's why we're honored to be on this committee to help try to prevent scams that impact older Americans, because as I see in my office, the Office of Investor Education, they're not more susceptible to scams, but certainly older Americans are targeted much more often. And that's one thing that we try to have education at the forefront, to make sure that

people have this ounce of prevention, and it truly is worth a pound of cure because once the money is gone, even if we have a successful enforcement action, there may not be money to return to harmed investors. So enforcement, examination, but also education. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

Patricia Hsue:

Thanks so much, Lori. Now, I'd like to invite the representative for The Money Services Round Table to introduce themselves.

Sean Ruff:

Thank you. My name is Sean Ruff, and I'm here representing The Money Services Round Table. The Money Services Round Table, or TMSRT for short, is a consortium of leading non-bank money transmitters that offer a variety of funds, transmission and related payment services to multiple point of sale and online channels. Current members of TMSRT are Ria Financial Services, Sigue Corporation, American Express Travel Related Services Company Inc., Western Union Financial Services Inc., Western Union International Services Inc., and MoneyGram Payment Systems Inc.

Sean Ruff:

TMSRT supports a fair, efficient and effective regulation of money services companies that help ensure that funds held in trust are protected as appropriate. Financial services providers are safe and sound, and money laundering, terrorist financing, and other illicit activities such as elder fraud or scams is detected and prevented to the extent reasonably possible. And preventing fraud is a top priority for TMSRT members. TMSRT members devote a great deal of resources to detect and prevent fraudulent transactions, and in connection with anti fraud programs, emphasize consumer education awareness, fraud monitoring, fraud controls, and ongoing collaboration with law enforcement entities around the world. TMSRT appreciates the opportunity to participate in the advisory group and its committees, and we look forward to contributing to this very important endeavor. Thank you.

Patricia Hsue:

Thank Sean. Now, I'd like to invite the representative for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, to introduce themselves.

Eden Ruiz-Lopez:

Good afternoon. My name is Eden Ruiz-Lopez, and I'm an Aging Services Program Specialist from the Office of Elder Justice and Adult Protective Services. And this is housed in the Administration for Community Living within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. ACL's vision for elder justice entails comprehensive multidisciplinary approach that effectively supports older adults and adults with disabilities, so that they could exercise the right to live where they choose, with the people they choose and fully participate in their communities without threat of abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation.

Eden Ruiz-Lopez:

ACL and DHHS are honored and privileged to have this opportunity to participate in the Stock Senior Scams advisory meeting. And this mission of the advisory group is near and dear to us at ACL and DHHS. Not only do we fund a range of grants and projects that advance economic security, but many of our elder abuse and elder rights projects focus on fraud education and broadly disseminating resources. In

fact, just two weeks ago, alongside our contractors, the Adult Protective Services Technical Assistance Resource Center, we partnered with the Department of Justice, the Center for Elder Law and Justice, and a National Adult Protective Services Association board member, to shed light on current trends surrounding grandparent scams. And having said all of this, we look forward to actively participating in the group, the work of this advisory group, and promoting, of course, person-directed, person-centered approaches to remediating and combating scams. So special thanks to FTC for inviting us.

Patricia Hsue:

Thanks so much, Eden. Next, I'd like to invite the representative for the U.S. Department of Justice to introduce themselves.

Andy Mao:

Good afternoon. My name is Andy Mao, and I'm the Department of Justice's National

Andy Mao:

... National Elder Justice Coordinator. Combating elder fraud and abuse is one of the department's highest priorities, and it is an honor to be a member of the advisory group, and I look forward to working with all of you.

Andy Mao:

The department has a multi-pronged approach to combating elder fraud abuse. First and foremost, of course, is our investigative and prosecutorial efforts. From combating transnational elder fraud schemes to nursing homes that are providing gross substandard care, the department prosecutes and investigates a wide array of fraud and abuse schemes.

Andy Mao:

In addition to that, we recognize that we need the support and need to enhance the efforts of our state and local elder justice professionals. And so the department has developed a wide array of training, resources and tools to enhance the capacity of our state and local partners in their efforts to combat, prevent elder abuse, neglect, financial exploitation, and fraud.

Andy Mao:

The third prong of our efforts is to support victims, either through efforts like our elder fraud hotline in order to connect victims to where they need to report the crimes, or else to services. In addition to that, where possible, we try to either return monies and fraud schemes or to stop those transactions from taking place at all.

Andy Mao:

But the fourth prong is raising public awareness. As Director Levine indicated, law enforcement is not enough. This is not a problem that we can prosecute our way out of. And therefore, empowering older adults and their families with the information necessary to prevent themselves from being victimized by fraud is the best and must be the centerpiece of any elder justice strategy. And for that, we are honored and grateful for the FTC for convening this group and look forward to working with all the members on finding ways to prevent elder scams.

Patricia Hsue:

Thank you, Andy. Now I'd like to invite the representative for the US Department of Treasury to introduce themselves.

Lori Schock:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this critical agenda. My name is Adair Morris. I'm the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Capital Access at Treasury. The US Department of Treasury's mission includes the goal of maintaining a strong economy and creating economic and job opportunities by promoting the conditions that enable economic growth and stability at home and abroad by protecting the integrity of the financial system and other activities.

Lori Schock:

The Office of Consumer Policy leads Treasury's consumer work, supporting financial security of Americans, including access to safe and affordable financial products and services and the right information environment for financial decision-making. The Office of Consumer Policy also supports the Financial Literacy and Education Commission, the FLEC, which consists of 24 federal entities that collaborate to improve the financial literacy and education of persons in the United States. The Treasury Secretary is the chair of the FLEC.

Lori Schock:

The work of the Stop Senior Scams Advisory Group aligns with our efforts at Treasury, as consumer protection is an important component of financial security and consumer empowerment, especially for vulnerable populations. We understand there is an unfortunate uptick in senior scams for older Americans, and we are compelled by the prospect of supporting initiatives to reduce the occurrence and impact of scams and frauds on older Americans. We are further honored that our designee, [inaudible 00:48:39], from the Office of Consumer Policy, will co-lead the Consumer Education and Outreach Commission. Many thanks to the FTC and all of the leadership on this call.

Patricia Hsue:

Thanks so much, Adair. Now I'd like to invite the representative for the US Postal Inspection Service to introduce themselves.

Gary Barksdale:

Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Gary Barksdale. I'm the Chief Postal Inspector from the United States Postal Inspection Service. First, I'd like to say certainly I'm an excited and willing participant in this newly-created advisory group. As a federal law enforcement agency, postal inspectors every day are out investigating large mass marketing fraud cases and all type of fraud cases. And as we all know, unfortunately, many of these suspects intentionally our most vulnerable population, which is our elderly.

Gary Barksdale:

We do a lot of this work in partnership with the Department of Justice Transnational and Other Fraud Strike Force. They're very focused on catching and prosecuting these criminals, but many may not know that we are also very actively trying to get money back to victims through the prosecution agreements.

And recently we had a case where the defendant agreed to pay \$127 million back, so we're working hard to get that money back to the victims.

Gary Barksdale:

But more pertinent to this group is our prevention and consumer education efforts. We have a team of victim service specialists that are tasked to coordinate elder fraud victims to try to get help from social services or local resources. So I really look forward to working with this group to develop more meaningful strategies to prevent scams and help educate our citizens, so look forward to the work. Thank you very much.

Patricia Hsue:

Thanks so much, Gary. Finally, but not least, I'd like to invite the representative for US Telecom to introduce themselves.

Jamie Renner:

Thank you, Patty. And I really appreciate the opportunity to be part of this advisory group and its important work. My name is Josh Bercu, and I'm Vice President Policy and Advocacy at US Telecom The Broadband Association. US Telecom is a 501(c)(6) trade association that represents service providers and suppliers for the communications industry. Our members range from the largest telcos that you know of and heard of to the small, local and regional companies that service their local areas and everything in between.

Jamie Renner:

For US Telecom, I lead our policy and advocacy work to stop the scam robo calls Director Levine referenced that prey on older adults and others. I also serve as the executive director of the Industry Traceback Group. The Industry Traceback Group, or ITG, is a collaborative effort of companies across the communications industry. Through the ITG, every day we trace back the illegal robo calls that are hitting consumers, older Americans and others, and find out where they are coming from, who is making them, and do what we can to get them off the phone network.

Jamie Renner:

The ITG is designated by the Federal Communications Commission as the official entity responsible for this call traceback process in the United States. And we work very closely with the law enforcement community, including the FTC, the FCC, and State AGs and others to arm them with information to hold illegal robo callers and their enablers accountable. I very much look forward to collaborating with this distinguished group, and thanks again for including us.

Patricia Hsue:

Thanks, Josh. And thank you so much to all of our advisory group members for introducing themselves and for joining us in this effort. Lois Christman will now give an overview of the work that this advisory group will be dressing in the upcoming year.

Lois Greisman:

Welcome again, everybody, and thanks Patty, and thanks again to the group members. It's really great to see so many familiar names and faces, and I very much look forward to working with all of you. So the

Stop Senior Scams Act that spurred formation of this advisory group gives us a wonderful opportunity to harness and build upon the individuals and the collaborative work we all do. It especially gives us the opportunity to innovate and explore new ways to protect and educate older adults.

Lois Greisman:

So to focus our efforts, we're forming four committees that will tackle different objectives. But to be clear, these are not silos. We expect that these committee efforts will be collaborative, given the substantive overlap in the important goals of each group, and interacting with one another as we leverage the collective skills and experience of all involved is going to be critical to success.

Lois Greisman:

So the four committees will focus on the following topics. First, consumer education. This committee is focused on how best to get consumer protection information to organizations with boots on the ground. So the committee will create networks to help spread consumer messages on the scams affecting older adults. And to create these networks, the committee will identify different trusted sources for key communities, and it will provide these sources with accessible and relevant consumer educational materials to help spread the word.

Lois Greisman:

This committee will seek input on identifying those trusted sources as well as the type of education materials most useful to older adults and on what topics. Members can work with or update existing materials. For example, Sam mentioned the FTC's own Pass It On campaign. Then with key resources in place to serve older adults, we hope this group will collaborate to identify and enlist new allies to become a part of Consumer Protection Network with all the preparation, training and evaluation that entails.

Lois Greisman:

So our second committee will focus on employee training for industries whose employees may be able to help spot and stop scams, such as bank tellers, store cashiers, gift card sellers or other payment providers. And more specifically, we envision that this group will help gather existing training or educational materials the industry is already employing, identify best practices, explore any gaps in existing training and propose modifications or new trainings as may be necessary.

Lois Greisman:

Our third committee is going to focus on identifying new technologies or methods that industry can use to help consumers spot and stop scams better or faster. For example, this could include deploying new technologies, identifying sources of data that can make existing technologies more effective, or promoting sharing information more effectively across both industry and government. And in particular, we hope this group will examine payment instruments favored by scammers, gift cards, wire transfers, cryptocurrency, reload cards, among others, as well as look if these different ways that scammers can access funds from consumers or otherwise exploit these payment mechanisms.

Lois Greisman:

We hope this group will also be able to assess what workable stop gaps the industry can implement to prevent these payment mechanisms from being used to scam consumers and perhaps even refund money to consumers. Now we further expect this committee to look at the initial points of contact with

older adults, such as phone or social media, and further to explore technologies and methods to reduce the scammer's exploitation of these means of contact.

Lois Greisman:

Finally, our fourth committee will focus on research. This committee will collect existing research or data analysis that may be useful in helping industry, advocacy groups and government to evaluate what actions are most effective in stopping scams from affecting older adults. We expect a particular focus will be on preventative actions that would help older adults from communities of color or other demographic groups. This could include research on successful intervention techniques, effective messaging for consumers or employees or tangible benefits resulting from employee trainings.

Lois Greisman:

This committee will further identify where additional research would be helpful and those ways to accomplish that research. They may do this by identifying research questions, including any gaps in research that may exist, and also help to bring to fruition research that can help answer those questions. And in this manner, we hope the committee will be able to spur additional research initiatives. We realize these are ambitious goals for each committee, but the talent, the energy, and the passion are here, and we hope to tap even more going forward.

Lois Greisman:

Next slide, please. Now, if you're interested in joining one of these committees, please send an email to stopseniorscams@ftc.gov. And we ask that you do so by October 15th. Please also indicate in your email which committee you're interested in participating in and provide some background on why you think you'd be a good fit for that committee. And also, please tell us how you might be able to contribute.

Lois Greisman:

We hope to include as many participants as possible, but we may not be able to accommodate everyone's interest in committees that are sized to accomplish the ambitious agenda we've laid out. We very much appreciate input from all interested parties, and we will do our best to incorporate your feedback into each committee's work. Now, with that, a big thank you to all of you on this inaugural meeting of this Scams Against Older Adults Advisory Group. We very much look forward to working with you in the future and to hearing your ideas and your thoughts. And with that, this meeting is closed and our agenda is done. Thank you all very much and take good care.