

**EMPOWERING SENIORS THROUGH
FINANCIAL LITERACY: TOOLS TO
PROTECT SAVINGS, PREVENT FRAUD,
AND PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE**

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Wednesday, April 15, 2026

U.S. SENATE
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:30 p.m., Room SD-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Hon. Rick Scott, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senator Scott, Moody, Husted, Gillibrand, and Kim.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR
RICK SCOTT, CHAIRMAN**

The CHAIRMAN. The U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging will now come to order.

I'd like to start today's hearing by asking you to think about someone you love. We all have somebody we love. I would, first off, think about our five-year-old granddaughter that turns six tomorrow. She's so excited about her birthday. Maybe it's a parent, or a grandparent, or even a neighbor you've lived down the street from your whole life. Someone who worked hard their entire career, did everything they could to set themselves up for retirement, with the information available to them.

Now, ask yourself, ask yourself, is that enough? Does that person know when the best time to claim their Social Security benefits is? Do they know what happens to their monthly check if you claim it at 62, versus 67, versus 70? Do they know the difference between a Medicare Advantage plan and a Medigap supplement? Do they know what questions to ask before handing their savings over to a financial planner?

Chances are, they don't. It's not entirely their fault. For so many Americans, and especially our seniors, it's hard to find the information. When you do find it, it's often incredibly complicated, and it might be biased. As a country, we have done a poor job of ensuring people know their options and what route will work best for their needs. I wonder how AI answers these questions, it will be interesting, and it's having real consequences on our seniors' lives.

Right now, nearly half of older American households earn less than what's needed to cover basic living expenses; housing, health care, transportation, food, the basics, and they've all gone up in cost. Social security, which is about 78 percent of retirees. What

they depend on, only replaces about 40 percent of pre-retirement income, on average. Sometimes, people don't think about that. The math is hard. The reality is stark. There's little room for error.

At the same time, older Americans are being forced to make some of the most consequential financial decisions of their entire lives; when to retire, when to claim benefits, how to draw down savings without outliving them, how to evaluate insurance products, how to protect a home and estate. One thing, like in our state, people are frustrated. You buy a house, and your property insurance keeps going up, or your HOA fees. When I was growing up, if you got your house paid off, there was almost no other cost.

These aren't easy questions, and too many seniors are answering them alone, without clear guidance, under real pressure, and with less of a cushion than they expected. The result becomes a guessing game, where they hope for the best, and often, fear for the worst but you can't blame them. Too often, the resources they are supposed to help people best prepare are buried on government websites, written in language designed for policy experts, and delivered too late. I just learned yesterday, when the FDA does a recall, they just put it on a website. That's all they do, so you have no idea. It's fascinating. No idea. Who would think that would be a problem?

The challenges don't stop there. On top of all that, the scammers come calling. You know, I get on a daily basis now, and I delete it, and I hit send, somebody that has said I'm approved for a new credit line. Every day, it's a different number. Every day. In 2020, fraud and scam cost older Americans nearly five billion. These criminals are not amateurs. They use tools like artificial intelligence, voice cloning, government impersonation, and more to attack us all. They do their homework. They know exactly what to say and exactly how to say it. For all the work, they are counting on one thing: that nobody ever warned their victim about what to look for. That needs to change.

Financial literacy is one of the most powerful and most underused tools we have to protect older Americans, not just from fraud, but across the board. When seniors understand how their benefits work, they make better decisions. They know how to read a financial statement and recognize bad actors. They're harder to deceive. When they understand the difference between a legitimate investment and a pitch that's too good to be true, they protect themselves.

I got a letter from a Canadian law firm that said they think somebody died that was related to me because they had the last name, Scott, and they said they would split it with me and it was something like eight million, or ten million, or twelve million bucks and so, it looked like a nice letterhead from a law firm. I looked up. I got on the web, and I looked up the law firm. It looked like a legitimate law firm, but they didn't have any lawyers.

When they understand the difference between legitimate investment and pitch that's too good to be true, they protect themselves. When they know where to turn for trusted help, they know they're not navigating this alone and the best part? This doesn't require a new government program or more federal bureaucracy. It doesn't require more spending to be thrown at the problem. It requires

clear information, trusted messengers, and the commitment to actually get that information to people's hands.

This is exactly what this Committee set out to do, and today, I'm proud to announce the upcoming release of our—it's from both the ranking member and me. It's a new resource, "Guarding Your Nest Egg: A Financial Resource Guide for Older Adults." This package will cover the decisions that matter most in retirement; Social Security, Medicare, housing, charitable giving, disaster preparedness, and planning for the unexpected.

We also provide clear guidelines as to what a scam looks like, and how to guard yourself against them. Plain language tools you can actually use. It's available today at aging.senate.gov, because every older American in this country deserves the tools to protect what they spent a lifetime building. Not more red tape, not more bureaucracy, just clear information, and the freedom to use it.

Now, let me turn it over to the ranking member, who's been a pleasure to work with on this Committee.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR
KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, RANKING MEMBER**

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Chairman Scott.

I'm very grateful that we're having this hearing today. I'm very excited about our report. I think it's going to be great. I think people are going to benefit from it and use it. Thanks to the witnesses for being here. I appreciate your expertise, and your willingness to come help inform this debate so that we can hopefully do good things for our seniors and help them.

April is recognized as National Financial Literacy Month, and serves to raise awareness about the importance of financial education and income security. Over 11,000 Americans turn 65 every day, and longer lifespans translate into spending more years in retirement, fueling a need to carefully plan and to strategically save. These aging demographics also place a strain on our national, state, and local budgets, as well as our healthcare programs.

Recently, the President shared that in his estimation, "It's not possible to take care of Medicaid and Medicare. They can do it on a state basis. You can't do it on the federal level." I would like to offer a strong counterargument to this statement. Since 1965, when Medicaid and Medicare were signed into law for older Americans, the disabled, and people with limited resources, the American people have expected these programs to be there to help take care of them and their loved ones, when they need them.

Just as government plan, develop, and budget for public programs, so do the American people when they're saving for their own lives. No matter the circumstance, whether they are focused on wealth management, tax strategies, building an emergency savings fund, or simply navigating, paying for health insurance premiums or skilled nursing costs in retirement, Americans are simply doing the best they can to financially plan and provide for themselves and their families.

CDC data shows that approximately 44 percent of adults over 65 are diagnosed with a disability. However, many people struggle to see themselves in these health statistics, or to develop a future plan for a special needs adult or child and despite individuals find-

ing the time in their busy lives to build financial goals, and striving to adopt a commitment to savings, the unexpected always happens. Suddenly, you have an injury, a loss of a job, or a death in the family, and it could be the family's breadwinner, requiring financial stabilization, resilience, and a new path forward.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau serves individuals who suffer a financial shock, and victims of financial fraud and different scams, by providing resources and educational materials. We recognize that more needs to be done, strategically, to coordinate across government to better protect older adults from financial abuse and elder abuse.

I look forward to hearing from Americans and how they can become better empowered to secure their own future through enhanced financial competency, and what opportunities exist to improve financial and digital literacy in our education system. I also welcome your views on how we tackle persistent gaps in financial and digital literacy in underserved communities, and for women who are frequently responsible for caregiving and providing for multigenerational households.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ranking Member.

Now, I'd like to welcome our witnesses to join us for today's hearing. Our first witness is Christine Kieffer, senior director and interim head of FINRA's Office of Investor Education. FINRA is the frontline watchdog for America's investment markets, responsible for overseeing broker-dealers, enforcing the rules that protect investors, and make sure that people selling financial products actually meet the standards required to do so.

Christine leads FINRA's investor education mission, where they work on developing the tools, resources, and programs that help everyday Americans, including older Americans, understand their financial options and protect themselves from bad actors.

Thank you for being here, and please begin your testimony.

**STATEMENT OF CHRISTINE KIEFFER, SENIOR DIRECTOR
AND INTERIM HEAD, OFFICE OF INVESTOR
EDUCATION, FINRA WASHINGTON, DC**

Ms. KIEFFER. Good afternoon, Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Gillibrand, and members of the Committee. My name is Christine Kieffer, and I serve as interim head of investor education at FINRA. I'm honored to be here to offer insights on the role of financial literacy in empowering seniors and preventing fraud.

FINRA is a self-regulatory organization whose mission is to protect investors and preserve market integrity. The member firms and associated professionals we oversee are deeply committed to the issues discussed today. For older Americans, financial literacy is not a luxury. It's an essential set of skills needed for building wealth, protecting savings, and preserving autonomy. A devastating loss at the hands of a scammer can undo a lifetime of work, and severely impact both mental and physical health.

Today, I would like to emphasize three points. Financial literacy is protective, it is only part of the solution, and success requires a team effort. First, financial literacy is a critical buffer against the predictable and unpredictable challenges of aging. Individuals with

higher financial literacy are more likely to have emergency savings, better able to manage unexpected costs, and less susceptible to scams. Financial literacy matters not only in older age, but as we age. To support evidence-based programming, the FINRA Foundation undertakes and sponsors research to help policymakers and other stakeholders address financial literacy gaps.

Second, financial literacy alone cannot provide adequate protection against scams at scale. It must be coupled with awareness of specific scams, and a fluency in the tactics of persuasion or persuasion literacy. Collectively, these skills help individuals defend against emotional manipulation and safeguard their assets. To maintain effectiveness, however, scam prevention messaging must be widely disseminated and frequently, and we must employ other tools, including enforcement and regulatory action to protect Americans.

Third, tackling financial fraud requires a collaborative approach. Cybersecurity and fraud threats are often sophisticated operations, orchestrated by organized criminals across the globe, demanding a unified response. FINRA does its part to detect, prevent, and respond to these threats by working with a network of collaborators developing and distributing fraud prevention resources, and training consumers and professionals, including our member firms, law enforcement, federal and state regulators, social workers, and mental health professionals.

FINRA's member firms are on the front lines of investor protection. As a regulator, we are continuously improving our response to evolving threats. Early last year, we launched FINRA Forward, a series of initiatives to modernize our regulatory approach, including expanding our cybersecurity and fraud prevention activities. It also includes making enhancements to our rules that assist firms in safeguarding the accounts of older and vulnerable adults and in March of this year, we launched the Financial Intelligence Fusion Center, which is a secure forum where firms can receive and share timely, actionable cybersecurity and fraud threat intelligence to protect their customers and businesses.

Our collaboration extends to Congress, too. Last year, we hosted a fraud prevention and response training for constituent-facing staff. One office contacted us after the training to request assistance helping a constituent who was on the precipice of being victimized. The caseworker later shared that their intervention was successful, and the constituent walked away from the scam attempt unharmed.

Encouraged by this feedback, in May, we will be expanding this program with the launch of the Frontline Responders Program, a training that will equip congressional offices with the expertise to help constituents identify and report fraud, and find additional support. FINRA has long been committed to protecting senior investors and combating financial fraud. We look forward to lending our support to your efforts. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Our next witness, Sam Kunjukuraju, vice president of consumer education at the American Bankers Association Foundation. The ABA represents banks of every size around the country, and the foundation is dedicated to helping

Americans build the financial knowledge they need to make smart decisions at every stage of life.

Sam leads their consumer education work, and he understands something that doesn't get said enough: banks are often the first institution to notice when something has gone wrong for a senior customer. Whether it's a sudden wire transfer, an unusual withdrawal, or a pattern, that doesn't just add up, banks are often the first to notice.

Thanks for being here. Please begin your testimony.

**STATEMENT OF SAM KUNJUKUNJU, VICE PRESIDENT
OF CONSUMER EDUCATION, AMERICAN BANKERS
ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. KUNJUKUNJU. Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Gillibrand, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing. My name is Sam Kunjukunju. As you mentioned, I'm the vice president of consumer education at the American Bankers Association Foundation, a subsidiary of the American Bankers Association, that develops programs to help banks support the financial well-being of their customers and communities.

As you noted earlier, America is aging. By 2030, one in five people will be aged 65 and older. At the same time, elder financial exploitation is rising. Between 2024 and 2025, the FBI observed a nearly 60 percent increase in reported financial losses, and a 37 percent increase in complaints among older people. The FTC estimates losses might have been as high as \$81.5 billion in 2024 alone among older adults.

Given this reality, the ABA and the ABA Foundation works with banks on a four-pronged strategy to help protect older adults. First, educating consumers. Second, training bankers. Third, cultivating partnerships with law enforcement and adult protective services, and fourth, leveraging technology.

In 2016, the ABA Foundation launched the Safe Banking for Seniors program to equip bankers with tools to educate older adults. We provide bankers with presentation, slides, videos, handouts, and a variety of different materials to deliver community workshops. The program supports older adults and their families by focusing on preventing exploitation, strengthening financial caregiving, and managing money. It covers topics such as avoiding scams, preventing identity theft, digital safety matters, choosing a financial caregiver, understanding powers of attorney, and retiring with limited resources. To date, more than 2,000 banks have participated in the program.

We also collaborate with federal partners such as the FBI, the Secret Service, and eight other agencies to produce infographics on scams targeting older adults, from check washing and cryptocurrency investment scams, to government imposter and tech support scams and we run national awareness campaigns like Banks Never Ask That, and Practice Safe Checks to reinforce simple steps consumers can take to prevent fraud.

Beyond the consumer education campaigns, we work with bankers to recognize, respond to, and report elder financial exploitation. We developed an online course for bankers on elder financial exploitation prevention and created an Elder Fraud Prevention Sum-

mit to train bankers on protecting older customers. Additionally, we recognize that strong coordination with law enforcement and adult protective services is essential. We work with the National Adult Protective Services Association and convene forums that help banks and investigators share trends, improve communication, and partner together to combat elder financial exploitation.

Last, ABA helps banks explore innovative software solutions through the ABA Partner Network to strengthen fraud prevention efforts. These tools help banks detect suspicious activity, streamline reporting, and provide customers with more accessible banking experiences.

Banks across the Nation recognize that protecting older adults requires a diverse set of strategies, from large institutions to small community banks. Banks are hosting fraud prevention workshops, online bank training, financial wellness seminars, and coordinating outreach with community organizations.

While the banking industry is investing significantly in protecting older people, the scale of today's scams requires a strategic, coordinated national response. America needs a nationwide education campaign bringing together federal agencies, nonprofits, as well as the private sector, to expose common scam tactics such as impersonation, manufactured urgency, demands for secrecy, and pressure to act quickly. At the same time, Congress should consider legislative solutions that empower banks to delay transactions when they suspect elder financial exploitation. A clear federal standard with an appropriate, safe harbor would help financial institutions further protect older adults.

In conclusion, the banking industry is committed to protecting older adults through education, partnerships, and responsible innovation. With a unified national awareness campaign and clear authority to pause transactions when suspecting exploitation, we can better prevent fraud and help older people preserve the financial security they have worked a lifetime to build.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing. I look forward to your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Sam. Now, I'd like to introduce Carly Roszkowski, vice president of financial resilience programming at AARP. Carly leads AARP's efforts to help seniors build real financial resilience, the kind that holds up when costs rise, when a scammer calls, or when life throws something unexpected at you in retirement. AARP reaches older Americans in every congressional district in this country, and she brings both the data and the on-the-ground experience to speak to what seniors are actually facing.

Thank you for being here. Please begin your testimony.

**STATEMENT OF CARLY ROSZKOWSKI, VICE PRESIDENT
OF FINANCIAL RESILIENCE PROGRAMMING,
AARP, WASHINGTON, DC**

Ms. ROSZKOWSKI. Thank you, Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Gillibrand, and members of the Committee for inviting me to testify for this timely and important hearing. My name is Carly Roszkowski, and I am the vice president of financial resilience programming at AARP. We deeply appreciate your attention to the important role financial literacy plays in building a more secure retirement.

Financial literacy is foundational to economic security. It can help Americans save to afford housing and health care, avoid debt and fraud, make informed retirement decisions, and remain independent as they age but financial literacy is not something that can be one and done. It must happen across one's life, especially as we age, when financial decisions become more complex and the consequences more severe.

We live in a new world, where the retirement system has shifted risk from companies to workers. Individuals, not companies, must manage saving, investing, and turning those savings into lifelong income. Folks now have to decide on investment strategies, decide when and how to claim Social Security, draw down assets with little or no professional guidance, and balance that with ever rising living costs and unknown lifespans. To make things worse, these decisions often occur during major life transitions, retirement, caregiving, widowhood, job loss, or health challenges, when people are least equipped to absorb complexity or recover from mistakes.

Today, 64 percent of adults worry they won't have enough money to retire, and nearly one in five non-retirees has no retirement savings at all. Millions of retirees have returned to work, primarily because they need the income, though purpose does matter, too. Rising costs, longevity, uncertainty, and lack of guaranteed income mean this trend will likely continue. Work has become a bridge to financial security later in life, but that bridge is strongest when people understand the financial tradeoffs involved and have access to clear, trusted information.

Financial literacy is also a critical defense against fraud. Older adults are disproportionately targeted by increasingly sophisticated scams that exploit technology, urgency, and trust. Fraud is no longer limited to suspicious phone calls. It involves email, text messages, social media, and artificial intelligence. Without ongoing, accessible financial education, even experienced consumers can be vulnerable.

That is why financial literacy for older Americans must go far beyond basic lessons on saving or budgeting. It must include guidance on managing retirement income, coordinating Social Security with work and health costs, understanding decumulation, navigating digital financial tools, and recognizing and responding to fraud. It must reflect how people actually experience finances later in life, not just early in their careers.

Equally important, financial education must be delivered in ways that work for older adults. A one-size-fits-all approaches are not effective. People vary widely in their comfort with technology. Learning styles and access to information programs are most effective when they use trusted messengers, plain language, and real-world examples.

At AARP, we see that when older adults have access to relevant, trustworthy financial information, outcomes improve. People are better able to avoid scams, manage debt, stretch their savings, and maintain independence longer. Financial literacy is not just an individual benefit. It reduces public costs and strengthens families and communities.

In closing, the realities of longer lives, for some, rising costs, and a retirement system that places increasing responsibility on indi-

viduals demand a renewed focus on financial literacy that is practical, ongoing, and actionable. By investing in trusted education, decision support tools, and policies that reflect how people work and retire today, we can help ensure that every American has the knowledge and confidence to achieve financial security, independence, and dignity as they age. As Congress considers how to strengthen financial literacy efforts, we urge you to ensure a life-long approach and ensure older adults needs are a priority.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to protecting older Americans. I look forward to your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Carly. Now, I'd like to recognize Ranking Member Gillibrand to introduce our last witness.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to move to introduce our next witness, Scott Kahan. Mr. Kahan is a certified financial planner, educated and lifelong New Yorker. In 1986, Mr. Kahan founded the Financial Asset Management Corporation, which operates in Westchester County and New York City, and serves as president and senior financial planner.

He provides pro bono financial planning for those in need, regularly organizes college planning seminars for the community, and is responsible for the establishment of the Certificate in Financial Planning program at NYU. Notably, Mr. Kahan spearheaded the coordination of pro bono financial planning services for affected 9/11 families and provides assistance to individuals who continue to cope with ongoing impacts.

Mr. Kahan, it's your time to speak.

**STATEMENT OF SCOTT KAHAN, CFP, PRESIDENT
& SENIOR FINANCIAL PLANNER, FINANCIAL ASSET
MANAGEMENT CORPORATION, CHAPPAQUA, NEW YORK**

Mr. KAHAN. Chairman Scott, Ranking Member, Gillibrand, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Scott Kahan, I'm a certified financial planner professional, and for more than 40 years, I have worked directly with individuals and families in New York to help them build financial security and peace of mind. I appreciate the Committee's focus on empowering seniors through financial literacy, particularly during Financial Literacy Month.

In both my personal and professional life, I have learned that access to trustworthy financial planning improves outcomes. Research consistently shows that individuals who work with the CFP professional are more likely to have emergency savings, feel financially secure, and feel confident about their future. Financial planning isn't a luxury, it's a lifeline and when it matters most, it needs to come from a CFP professional.

Today's seniors face incredibly complex financial decisions, choosing when to claim Social Security, navigating Medicare, managing retirement income, and planning for long-term care, among other challenges. At the same time, seniors are being targeted by increasingly sophisticated fraud. Advances in AI have made scams more convincing than ever. It can be hard to tell what is real.

When seniors are victimized by fraud, the impact is often devastating. Unlike younger victims, seniors frequently do not have time or income to recover. Money lost to fraud is money they plan to use to support themselves in retirement. The harm is imme-

diate, and under the current tax law, victims often face a tax bill on those losses, creating a double hit. For many seniors, financial fraud is not just a setback, it's permanent.

We should empower seniors with clear information, trustworthy guidance, and tools to protect themselves in an increasingly complex financial landscape. Financial security supports independence, family stability, and dignity in later life. Financial literacy and access to competent and ethical financial planning can make a real difference.

CFP professionals help individuals cut through complexity, recognize bad information, and make decisions grounded in their best interests. We work holistically across budgeting, investing, insurance, taxes, and retirement planning. Just as important, we are financial first responders, and often spot early warning signs of fraud or financial exploitation, and can help intervene before damage becomes irreversible.

The broader financial picture in this country makes this work even more urgent. Many Americans are financially vulnerable long before fraud enters the picture. A large portion of households lack even modest emergency savings. For seniors living on fixed income, a single, unexpected event can trigger long lasting financial harm. I've seen all this repeatedly, in my own work, and in my own life, as a newly minted senior citizen.

I recently navigated Medicare. I'm a CFP professional with 40 years of experience, and it still challenged me. Imagine facing that system alone without my background or without the help of an expert like a CFP professional. I've also lived the reality of the sandwich generation. My parents retired earlier than their resources realistically allowed. They eventually ran out of money. I supported them for much of their retirement, while raising my own children and saving for my own retirement.

Their experiences are far from unique. Many families are quietly carrying the same burden. Too often, people seek help only when they are already in crisis but crisis is the worst time to make complex and impactful financial decisions. Just as we encourage preventative health care, financial planning should be viewed as preventative care for financial well-being.

You shouldn't have to be wealthy to benefit from financial planning. Many CFP professionals provide pro bono financial planning services. After 9/11, I began offering free financial planning to victims in New York, an experience that showed me how powerful timely guidance can be. I support that work today as a member and former chair of the board of the Foundation for Financial Planning, an organization that provides funding to community-based organizations to provide pro bono financial planning along with financial literacy to underserved populations like military families, families suffering financial hardship due to cancer, and seniors in crisis.

I also know that the CFP board has called upon Congress to expand access to financial planning through policy tools such as tax incentives, particularly for middle income Americans. Financial literacy and access to trusted financial planning help seniors navigate complexity, avoid fraud, and protect their futures. I urge the Com-

mittee and Congress to continue advancing policies that expand access to this vital protection. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank each of you for being here. Now, we'll turn over to questions. We'll start with Senator Husted.

Senator HUSTED. Thank you, Chairman Scott and, so I want to focus on how seniors are being exploited through scams and the nature of what's happening to many seniors that are being targeted by criminals, because what I think is especially sinister about it is they prey on their generosity, their compassion, and their kindness and, you see that, particularly with AI-driven technologies, they can impersonate the voice of a child, a grandchild. They can find new and inventive ways of scamming our seniors.

Frankly, I think the criminals that do this, there's a special place in hell for them, because it's so awful what they do to these senior citizens who are preyed upon. I've introduced legislation preventing deepfake scams that would establish a task force and work with financial institutions on how we can use and avoid the abuses of AI, how we can use it for good, how we can use it to protect seniors from the potential risks.

Let me start—and I wasn't here for the pronunciation of your name, but I'm going to go—the way it has it phonetically spelled here is Mr. Kunguyen. Got it. All right and I want to start with you. What can banks and other financial institutions do? What are you doing? What can we do proactively to protect seniors from these AI-driven scams?

Mr. KUNJUKUNJU. Sure. There's a couple of things that are going on, and I want to thank you for your question because this is something that bankers are dealing with on a regular basis. It's an everyday situation for looking at this particular type of issue.

When it comes to banks, what we're doing is we're making sure that they are appropriately trained and one of the major indications of something that is wrong is a change in a person's behavior. Whether that might be something along the lines of their demeanor might be changing, maybe they're stressed out all of a sudden, maybe they're suddenly disheveled. Something looks off. That's one of the steps.

A second step is to look at if there's any changes to the accounts. Is something going on very differently there that seems to be indicative of some sort of exploitation or fraud? A third area is, is there some sort of a change having to do with the transaction? Are they wiring money abroad when they never wired money anywhere? Those are some of the ways that we are training banks to identify these issues.

Separate from that, we're also educating consumers on a couple of key things. Make sure that you talk to people in your trusted circle before you make any financial decision. Don't trust your phone number. If phone numbers can be spoofed, caller IDs can be spoofed. Don't trust that information. Always hang up on somebody. Call back if there's some sort of urgency or concerns about anything that might be popping up, and reach back out to that person on a known number, or if it's an organization on the back of a bank card, a legitimate number along those lines.

Senator HUSTED. Great advice for family members. What can you do to—what kind of recommendations do you have for family members about if they're concerned about their elderly family members?

Mr. KUNJUKUNJU. In this case, I would say families need to be involved with money decisions. One of the major concerns about all of this is that, oftentimes, if there's loneliness or social isolation, that makes an individual much more vulnerable. If we, as a country, become much more socialized with the idea of being involved in our family's money, to make sure that we can check out and see what's going on, having these discussions, this could be incredibly important and valuable.

In addition to that, banks, as well as securities firms, have implemented trusted contact opportunities. If something is off or seems awry, a bank or financial institution can reach out to a trusted contact to get in touch with someone if something looks off. If families and customers can identify who that is, that provides a great opportunity to get in touch and have some of those conversations.

Senator HUSTED. Then, quickly, what are some of the emerging scams? What are some of the things that you are seeing that people ought to be aware of today?

Mr. KUNJUKUNJU. I would say the top three scams are; investment-oriented scams, tech support scams, as well as romance scams. These are three scams that the FBI identified as the top scams for losses among older adults. That being said, tangentially, cryptocurrency-oriented scams have also been highlighted in about 20 percent of all complaints in 2025 alone.

Senator HUSTED. Okay. Great. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Senator Gillibrand.

Senator GILLIBRAND. I'd like to give it to Senator Kim.

Senator KIM. Thank you. Yes. Sorry, I just jumped straight in here, but thank you for letting me be able to jump in. I didn't catch, you know, the fullness of that answer just there on the scam side, but I'd love to be able to just keep that conversation going in terms of just, you know, in terms of what comes next here, so you know, I'm trying to think through this in terms of, you know, what to expect going forward.

A couple of years out, we know how much the technology has been strengthening it up here and so, we're looking at this, and living through this moment of immense technological change and, you know, look, there's a lot of that. That's exciting, but it's also dramatically increasing the risks from sophisticated actors that are seeking to take advantage of this.

You know, maybe I'll just start with, Ms. Kieffer, to be able to just go through here. If you could share, I mean, I know you talked about some of this just more broadly as a group, but could you share with me more about some of the fast-growing types of scams targeting older Americans right now, and how you see them evolve in the last couple of years? What to expect next? I know that was some of what was talked about to keep building on it.

Ms. KIEFFER. Thank you for the question, Senator. What we're seeing today is a merging of scam typologies and, oftentimes, what might start as a relationship, or not even a romance, just a friendship, morphs into an investment scam. Sometimes, it is a trading

strategy suggestion. Sometimes, it might be a pump and dump scheme, an old school pump and dump turned into a relationship and romance scam.

In many, many cases, we see recovery operations. Where after the first scam has taken all that they can from a victim, we see a follow-on scam implemented by the same perpetrators that are coming for either additional funds, sometimes requesting HELOCs, or that they take money from family and friends. In FINRA's purview, we see a lot of the investment scam infrastructure, and we see it morphing in those ways that I just suggested.

Senator KIM. I'll stick with you here. You know, so I recently introduced with some of my colleagues, the Senior Security Act and, you know, we're looking at other ways, you know, that would create a senior investor task force within the SEC, strengthen some of these safeguards.

As we're thinking about these next steps, I mean, do you have thoughts on what we should be taking away in terms of what and how federal regulators can continue to coordinate on this issue, to try to develop the best strategies for seniors to both be able to protect them from the scams, but also to be better educated on just the technology and the positive use as well of that.

Ms. KIEFFER. Well, the positive use of the technology is one that would be a wise area to study, because we need to get ahead of the scams. Once the money is out the door, it's very difficult to recover and so, to the extent that we can be working public-private partnerships that encourage the use of these same transformative technologies to prevent the pitches from ever reaching the individual, we would be well served, and that would be the beginning of bending the curve but it does take all of us working together in the different corners that we serve, using the different jurisdictions that we have to make a difference.

Senator KIM. You know, Ms. Roszkowski, I wanted to just bring you in on this, because, you know, as we've been trying to do efforts throughout my State of New Jersey, in terms of educating and being able to inform about fraud prevention, especially with seniors, I think some of the biggest challenge we have is not just the quality of information or the approach, but the capacity to scale when we have just such an enormity of people were trying to reach. You know, my office, it just feels like sometimes we're, like, is this even making a difference? Because of just the sheer number of seniors that we're still not able to connect in with.

I guess I just wanted to ask you, just, what are some of the better strategies and the tactics that we should be thinking about and to actually be able to scale this type of education that we know is so important, but how do we do that in a way that meets the moment?

Ms. ROSZKOWSKI. Thank you for that question, Senator. Fraud is growing at an alarming pace. We talked about investment scams, AI-related scams, job scams are up. AARP educates consumers through our Fraud Watch Network and works with fraud and scam victims through our free helpline. It's a free resource, open to all, and it ensures victims are all treated fairly and works with their families.

We are very grateful for your support and leadership on both the GUARD Act, as well as the Tax Relief for Victims of Crimes, Scams, and Disasters Act. We need to continue educating, and educating in different channels and in different spaces. Being in every state, AARP has the ability to be on the ground in local communities educating on the scams that might be more local, and we have the power to educate and create awareness across the Nation for the scams, and getting ahead of those scams, and continue to educate both in a financial literacy component, integrating fraud education into when we're talking about financial implications, but also through all of our other channels.

Senator KIM. Yes, thank you for that and I'll yield back, Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Moody.

Senator MOODY. Thank you, Senator Scott, for holding this hearing. Thank you, Ranking Member Gillibrand. This is an issue that is very near and dear to my heart. It always has been. I grew up with a mother who spent her entire professional career dedicated to making sure low-income seniors were not taken advantage of and helping them. It was incredible to watch, and certainly, my perspective on some of this and what we can be doing to be more fiercely guarded and protective of our seniors, probably formed at an early age, and carried on through my adult years.

As attorney general, because I watched and heard so many times that our seniors were being taken advantage of, I started kind of the first ever senior protection team with overlaying all different agencies, different forms of investigators, prosecutors, civil attorneys, all with this mindset of what—how can we be better in Florida?

Obviously, Florida is a civil state, a senior state. We have a lot of seniors, and we started really its first of its kind in the Nation, a cyber fraud unit, statewide initiative, because we saw so many seniors with the evolution of new technology, really good technology, that was being manipulated by criminals to take advantage of seniors. We wanted to educate them anywhere from the crypto space, to the ATMs, to internet scams.

Really, as this team of investigators and prosecutors became more up to speed, they were able to take and piece together things that even the Federal Government may not have taken for threshold reasons. Maybe the dollar amount wasn't a lot, even though it was a large amount of someone's life savings, or we would determine cumulative patterns where we saw, when we put it together, it would have met threshold amounts.

After we did that, we had other states coming to us, asking how they could do the same things. I really, really would love to see more federal coordination of these state technologically and legally trained investigators, prosecutors, civil attorneys, to specifically address fraud on seniors using technology, really any fraud using technology, and make sure that they can help and overlay the resources we have in the Federal Government. We're exploring ways to do that now.

Specifically, as it relates to Seniors, I've noticed that when there were—this fraud, for example, more recently, we've seen the scams go as far as courtrooms set up with actual judges, and lawyers, and

prosecutors and they'll get people in these Zoom hearings and trick them into thinking they're in some sort of legal proceeding.

Of course, then the next step is, they then go to banks or financial institutions, and try and withdraw money, and send it by wire, or some other place to satisfy some court debt or obligation that they've been tricked into believing they owe.

A lot of the banks are really under a lot of pressure with the evolution of these new types of scams, to examine how they can be good faith players when they realize something may be amiss and certainly, we never, ever want to facilitate the meritless holding of anyone's assets or money. Certainly, and that would always be a concern but I'm very interested in what some states are trying to do with bankers and, and, their initiatives, many states have passed, I guess, what's called hold laws. More recently, in Florida, they just passed a Protection of Specified Adult statute, went into effect in January 2025.

I'm just wondering, and I guess I'll direct this question to Mr. Kunjukunju, what can we learn from states that have delved into working with banks to protect seniors where they believe things may be amiss, where they may have fallen for some of these technologically advanced scams? Have we seen those types of statutes be effective? Are the majority of states using this, and how has the Federal Government played into some of those protective efforts.

Mr. KUNJUKUNJU. Sure. Thank you for your question. It is something that we're interested in at the American Bankers Association, as well. There's about 27 states around the country that have passed one of these hold and delay laws. A lot of the origin from this has also been proliferating as a result of what worked on the security side. In 2018, there was a rule—two rules, actually, associated with this. One was 2165, the other was FINRA Rule 4512. One has to do with the hold and delay laws on the security side, and then the second is related to that having to do with the trusted contact.

There's been a couple of years where we've seen this happen, especially on the security side of when it comes to looking at financial institutions, but we've seen a lot more progress, given that we've got 27 states around the country that have passed these laws on the stateside for depository institutions.

One of the major things that comes into play with this is, we have to make sure that we appropriately educate people that this is possible, because when an older adult may walk into a branch and has this conversation, and is not under the impression that they know that they're in the middle of a scam, but if a banker thinks that they're in the middle of a scam, and a banker starts to ask them questions, initially, the older adult may be a little bit put off. Second, if the bank says, you know, we're going to investigate this for a couple of days, that's going to lead to some complications. We have to get ahead of all of that to make sure people understand this is for their benefit.

Second, this is sort of making sure that this is something that is, one, legal and allowed, so the customer doesn't just leave and say I'm going to go to another bank and then go through this whole process, because that's what's really key here.

To your other point, Senator Moody, what I would say is, what you've done in Florida has been amazing. I would say you may also want to look into what's worked in Texas as well. They started the financial intelligence centers, and that's financial crimes intelligence centers and that's been something that has been really beneficial to tackle white collar crimes.

Senator MOODY. Thank you so much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Moody. Our Ranking Member, Gillibrand.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Banking and financial planning processes have shifted heavily toward digital platforms, requiring increasing digital literacy skills to navigate these systems. AARP research shows that most older adults use financial technology for basic tasks, such as checking bank accounts, but are not engaged in more sophisticated tools that facilitate investment, loan applications, or advanced planning. Sixty-four percent of older adults report to AARP that they do not feel technology is designed with them in mind, providing evidence of technology being viewed as a barrier to financial planning, rather than a tool.

Mr. Kahan, have you encountered clients facing difficulties with financial technology while planning for the retirement? What types of tools or supports would help seniors who are having trouble navigating this digital landscape?

Mr. KAHAN. Thank you for the question. We find that seniors often have problems with technology. Many times, as a practitioner, professional, CFP professional, people are coming into us to help them with retirement planning, we sometimes see things that they've done because they read it online. They clicked a link or something, and they've got some issues to deal with.

I mean, from a basic standpoint, we try to educate clients, one, you know, most of the scams we find start at the computer level from emails where they're clicking something, so we encourage them to have virus protection. Understanding how to read an email, if it's real or not. People will click on for Social Security, or they'll google something for Social Security and they're brought to many different sites. Explain to clients that if it doesn't end in .gov, G-O-V, it is not necessarily a legitimate site, and they may be trying to sell you something, so explain to people to hover over an email so they understand to see where that's really coming from because it's not necessarily coming from where you think it is.

Understanding their choices, Social Security, Medicare, and then again, looking at how they can identify the fraud that's coming in, because it's not just about the retirement planning part. It's about really understanding what they're reading, which many times is very confusing, because as clients of age, they're reading some of the most difficult decisions are tied to choosing when to take Social Security, when, you know, Medicare, especially if you're still working, what are the options for Medicare? When they start to go online, they start to really click in. They're their various websites, and some of them are fine, and a lot of them are fraudulent.

We've had stories from clients where they wind up getting scammed for something, and then they're embarrassed to talk about it and that is a big problem, because they don't want to tell their family members about it. They don't want to tell their spouse

or partner about it but we'll see it, many times, or they'll finally open up about it, or, you know, having a family member contact us to say somebody was scammed and what can we do about that?

It's a matter of educating the clients about how to use the technology. Some of them can. Some of them will not be able to but letting them know it's okay to bring a family member in or a trusted advisor to help them go through to see what's legitimate, what's not. Because too often than not, we are seeing people scammed at every level. They're getting the phone calls. They're getting texts. You know, we tell people, sometimes when you answer your phone, don't say your name because they voice record it, and now they can use that to maybe hack into one of your other accounts, and they don't even realize it.

It's a matter of trying to educate them. The best way of what, where the scams are, and how technology is useful, but you have to be able to use it properly.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Right. Ms. Roszkowski, American workers and retirees are facing rising inflation and soaring costs. They're seeing their costs for groceries to go up, healthcare, utilities, housing. Earlier this year, AARP declared retirement is on pause. High costs push older Americans back to work. What are your members sharing as their top concern in these day-to-day issues that they are dealing with for their own retirement?

Ms. ROSZKOWSKI. Thank you for your question, Ranking Member. They are concerned about affording everyday costs. They're concerned about groceries. They're concerned about gas. They're concerned about health care. They're concerned that they will outlive their retirement savings. Our research shows not only that seven percent of "un-retirees" are going back into the workforce, which is up from the survey we did last summer, in 2025, also shows that 28 percent of retired people are unfortunately—they think they've retired too early. They're concerned they're going to outlive their savings. People—some people are living longer, and it's hard to plan for.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Yeah.

Ms. ROSZKOWSKI. We're feeling it, not only with everyday costs, but also long-term care, health care and women, 50 and older, say that everyday costs is their number one concern.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Ms. Kieffer, with your work at FINRA, and the Investor Education Foundation, what are the most common challenges older adults face while managing their own investments in retirement, and where are the biggest knowledge gaps?

Ms. KIEFFER. The switch from accumulation to decumulation, and in some cases, it's not a perfect switch, there's a little bit of both happening, but older adults are facing new decisions, new products, potentially a new risk profile that they've not come back to revisit in some time. Just understanding in this uncertain time period of longevity that we all grapple with. Coming to terms with these new product opportunities, new decisions that need to be made, and switching the mindset to a decumulation phase can be very difficult. For some, they might choose to work with a financial professional in that capacity. Maybe they didn't prior and would like to at this time.

Whenever anyone is choosing to work with a financial professional, if someone comes to them directly, or they're going directly to someone, they should always check out the background of that professional before they sign on any lines or even have followup meetings. They should use FINRA BrokerCheck to see if the person is registered. Are they registered to sell securities? Are they registered for investment advice?

The SEC's Investment Adviser Public Disclosure Data base provides similar information where investors can understand what the registration is, the services that are offered, and they should ask about fees. For some, navigating these challenges is supported by a financial professional, and for others, they really need to take the time to educate and learn about these products.

To the extent that we, as educators, can be out there sharing information, not just about scams and frauds, of course, but about financial decisionmaking. The Investor Insights, articles that FINRA puts out—some I would call 911, they're emergent issues, and some I would call 411, they're educational resources—where we help people understand what a product is, what are the pros and considerations are, so they can make those informed financial decisions that are appropriate to their life.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ranking Member.

Ms. Kieffer, studies consistently show that financial literacy declines with age, even among people who are financially sophisticated earlier in life. Is the financial industry doing enough to account for that reality, and how it designs products and delivers advice to older customers.

Ms. KIEFFER. Thank you for the question. While I can't comment to what the industry specifically is doing in this area, I do know that FINRA members are committed to investor protection, and are regularly sharing investor education information and working with their clients to understand the different products that they're offering and being offered. We always stand behind—if you don't understand the product, you need to double-think whether that product is for you, and that's a premise of all of our investor education.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks. Mr. Kunjukunju, say, a senior walks into a bank branch and asks to wire \$50,000 to someone they met online three weeks ago. What specific training do frontline bank employees receive today to recognize that situation as potential fraud?

Mr. KUNJUKUNJU. Yes, thank you so much for that question, because that is very much along the lines of things that happen. Banks provide the training, but we also do with the ABA. One of the things that we do is we focus on those three areas; looking at the changes in demeanor, changes in transaction, changes in accounts to try to determine what might be going on, so in this type of situation, they're going to be looking at—looking back at their training to understand, okay, what is different here? Is there some sort of change in this particular scenario? There is absolutely a change if this person has never wired money abroad.

Second, it's going to be looking at information about whether this person has even used this amount of money ever to take out, to

transfer, to do anything along those lines and then the third piece of this is to really understand why are they sending this money.

To your point about the question that has to do with the nature of this relationship. They'll be asking some specific, pointed questions to understand how did this develop? How long have you been in relationship with this person? How did you meet them? Have you ever met them online? Those are the types of things that they'll be asking.

Beyond that, if, depending on state law, they might have the ability to delay it, investigate further, or they might reach out to Adult Protective Services and/or law enforcement to get involved and to address the situation, or reach out to a trusted contact regarding this concern.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Ms. Roszkowski, Social Security claiming decisions are among the most consequential financial choices an older American will ever make, often without professional guidance. AARP has done extensive work on this issue. What does your data show you about how about how many Americans are leaving money on the table by claiming to earlier, and what it would take to change that?

Ms. ROSZKOWSKI. Thank you for the question, Chairman. Most of the people I talk to say they're going to retire at 65. Americans do not know enough about Social Security and the money they will leave on the table if they claim at a certain age. Many don't know their full retirement age, nor do they know it's approximately 8 percent per year they leave on the table if they choose to claim Social Security before age 70.

We are supporting bills, such as the Claiming Age Clarity Act, so thank you for your support. With that—and this isn't a one-size-fits-all decision—that is why it's critical to be educating along one's lifespan. Things may change from one year to the next, and Social Security is a one-time decision that can impact someone's full retirement, which may last 30 years, as well as their family. It's continuing to educate, and we know that Americans do not know enough about the implications of claiming too early as well as the money that they're leaving on the table.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Scott, the fiduciary standard requires financial advisers to act in their client's best interest, but not every person calling themselves a financial advisor is actually held to that standard. How does the senior, who has no background in finance, know whether the person managing the retirement savings is legally required to put their interests first?

Mr. KAHAN. The first thing we always tell people, seniors, they should be looking at a CFP professional. There're approximately 107,000 CFP professionals out there today. There's I don't know how many hundreds of thousands of so-called financial advisors. The CFP professionals have to follow a fiduciary standard, which is putting the client's best interests first.

People should be asking if, you know, when they're meeting with somebody, full disclosure. There're so many different compensation models out there. It's very confusing. There's commission, there's fees and commission. Not to say one is better than the other. Everybody has to figure out what works for them but full disclosure, there's nothing wrong with asking somebody that you're sitting

across from, as a planner or as advisor, whatever their term is, "What are you making? What are your commissions? What are your fees?" Fees are pretty apparent. Commissions are not always. It doesn't mean there's something wrong with that, but there should be no reason not to have full disclosure. That way, they can see or make a decision based on compensation of this is what you're doing for me, how much is it going to cost me? Because that is really the first step in understanding what the costs are.

Looking at fiduciary, putting the client's best interest first, is the most important thing. Because it's about ethics and trusted relationships, because people will share with us things that they don't share among each other. We'll have spouses come in and have conversations that they've never had before, and sometimes they're surprised of what the other one is saying. We're there to help mediate sometimes, but in reality, is to really figure out what the best interests for them and have that trusted relationship.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Ms. Kieffer, FINRA's BrokerCheck tool exists so that any American can look up whether their financial advisor has a history of misconduct, but surveys show that most seniors have never heard of it. How many older Americans are handling their retirement savings to someone with a disciplinary record right now simply because nobody told them to check?

Ms. KIEFFER. Thank you for the question, Senator. FINRA is committed to sharing the resource, BrokerCheck, and we work with a number of partners to make sure that Americans are aware of this tool. We have run public awareness campaigns. We work with our broker-dealers to make sure that the information is out there so that investors know to check.

Many years ago, we ran a campaign called, "Before You Invest, Ask & Check," that specifically was designed to drive traffic and understanding of this opportunity. The vast majority of brokers that are registered and inside of BrokerCheck do not have a disciplinary record, but it is absolutely the information that an investor should know to ask the questions they need to ask before working with someone.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Anything else?

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you all for your testimony.

The CHAIRMAN. I'd like to thank everyone for—does anybody have anything else they want to add?

[No response.] All right. I'd like to thank everyone for being here today and participating. This has been exactly the kind of conversation this Committee exists to have. Here's why I keep thinking about. The challenges we've talked about today are real. The gap between the information many seniors have and what they need is very real. The scammers and call centers overseas running script designed to steal a lifetime of savings from someone's grandparent is very real.

The confusion about Medicare, enrollment, windows, and Social Security timing decisions that cost people thousands of dollars they can never get back is real. We've spent decades building programs that are supposed to help seniors, and then bury them on government websites that no one can find or navigate. We've watched fraud explode while not doing anything about it.

My colleagues and I here on this Committee have to have legislation. Not just have legislation, but make sure Congress acts when it's needed. This Committee will keep pushing. We're going to keep shining a light on the gaps in financial education. We're going to keep demanding that Washington works for older Americans, because every senior in this country deserves to enjoy the retirement they spent their life building, with dignity, with independence, and with the knowledge they need to protect it.

I also want to remind seniors and families watching, that the Senate Aging Committee operates a fraud hotline for anyone who believes they may have been targeted or victimized. The number is 1-855-303-9470.

If any Senators have additional questions for the witnesses or statements to be added, their hearing record will be open until next Wednesday at 5:00 p.m. I want to thank everybody for being here.

[Whereupon, at 4:36 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Prepared Witness Statements

**Statement of Christine Kieffer
Interim President, FINRA Investor Education Foundation
Senior Director and Interim Head, FINRA Investor Education
Before the Special Committee on Aging
United States Senate
April 15, 2026**

Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Gillibrand and Members of the Committee:

Introduction

On behalf of the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) and the FINRA Investor Education Foundation (FINRA Foundation), I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear today to discuss tools for empowering older Americans through financial literacy.

As my testimony will demonstrate, for older Americans, financial literacy is not a luxury. It encompasses an essential set of skills needed for protecting savings, maintaining autonomy and preserving quality of life.

Seniors who possess stronger financial literacy are far better equipped to manage the complexities of retirement transitions, weather unforeseen expenses and make well-informed decisions about otherwise irreversible financial choices. Informed seniors show demonstrably greater resilience when facing financial shocks and are less vulnerable to fraudulent schemes. Financial literacy has the power to preserve assets, independence, health and cognitive function.

At the same time, financial literacy alone cannot provide adequate protection against the growing danger of scams. It must be coupled with scam awareness and persuasion tactic identification (persuasion literacy) education programs that equip seniors to defend against emotional manipulation, recognize warning signs and safeguard their assets. And it can be bolstered by financial intermediaries—like broker-dealers and securities professionals—with the right training and tools to help protect older Americans.

FINRA is dedicated to being a part of the solution. My comments will focus on the research, outreach and educational initiatives FINRA and the FINRA Foundation have underway to help Americans—including older and vulnerable adults—build their financial literacy, protect their savings, avoid financial fraud and achieve financial stability.

I will also address FINRA's work to provide its member firms and professionals with the tools and resources they need to protect senior and vulnerable investors, a top regulatory priority. This includes modernizing rules specially designed to protect these individuals and significantly increasing our capacity to combat cybersecurity and other fraud threats. It also includes close coordination with key stakeholders in the investor protection ecosystem, including the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), state regulators, industry members and the nonprofit community to broaden and enhance protections for retail investors.

Background on FINRA and the FINRA Investor Education Foundation

FINRA is a not-for-profit, self-regulatory organization (SRO) dedicated to investor protection and market integrity. FINRA regulates one critical part of the securities industry—member brokerage firms doing business in the U.S.¹ FINRA, overseen by the SEC, writes rules, examines for and enforces compliance with FINRA rules and federal securities laws, registers broker-dealer personnel and offers them education and training, and informs the investing public. In addition, FINRA provides surveillance and other regulatory services for equities and options markets, as well as trade reporting and other industry utilities.

In 2003, FINRA created the FINRA Investor Education Foundation (Foundation) to help Americans build financial stability, invest for life goals and guard against fraud and exploitation.² A wholly owned subsidiary of FINRA, the Foundation is a nonprofit organization governed by a separate board of directors. Its mission is to empower all Americans with the knowledge, skills and tools to make sound financial decisions throughout life. The Foundation advances innovative research and educational projects in support of this mission and also develops and directly manages targeted programs aimed at segments of the investing public that could benefit from additional resources, such as older Americans, military service members, and lower-income working Americans and their families. Much of this work is accomplished in partnership with organizations with a shared mission to advance consumer education and protection. Foundation-supported programs help hundreds of thousands of people each year.

What Is at Stake: Why Financial Literacy as We Age Is So Important

For older Americans, financial literacy is not optional but essential. It serves as a critical foundation for building and safeguarding wealth, sustaining autonomy, and ensuring a secure and dignified quality of life.

As we age, financial decisions become more complex and more consequential. With less time and opportunity to recover from mistakes, older adults enter retirement facing decisions they've never made before and with little room for error. These decisions include how to manage the transition from saving to spending, how to access pension or other retirement assets, when to claim Social Security, and how to navigate healthcare and long-term planning for an uncertain period of longevity. Without adequate financial literacy, older adults cannot make informed choices about these and other often-irreversible decisions, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and devastating financial and personal outcomes.

What's more, financial fraud is a growing concern for individuals of all ages. Reported fraud losses have risen nearly 430 percent since 2020, according to the Federal Trade Commission

¹ See <https://www.finra.org/about>.

² See <https://www.finrafoundation.org/about-us>.

(FTC).³ In 2025, the FTC received 3 million fraud reports from consumers reporting \$15.9 billion in losses, a sizeable increase from the \$12 billion reported in 2024. When accounting for underreporting, the FTC estimates that Americans lost nearly \$196 billion in 2024.⁴ A similar estimate for 2025 is not yet available, but with a nearly \$4 billion increase in reported losses, the 2025 estimate accounting for underreporting is set to well-exceed \$200 billion. Data from the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3.gov) tells a similar story of escalation.⁵

While older adults are commonly perceived as the primary victims of financial fraud, the data reveal a more nuanced reality. According to the FTC, adults aged 60 and older report losing money to fraud at lower rates than younger adults.⁶ However, when fraud does occur, older adults suffer significantly higher median losses per incident. Fraud schemes vary widely in their targeting patterns. Older adults are disproportionately affected by tech support scams, sweepstakes and lottery schemes, romance scams and government impersonation fraud. In terms of total dollars lost, investment scams and business and government impersonation schemes inflict the greatest financial damage on this age group. The FTC data illuminates just how damaging these schemes can be, with the overall increase in losses from 2024 to 2025 driven in large part by more reports of losses exceeding \$100,000.⁷ For some, the losses can encompass a lifetime of savings.

The consequences of such a loss can be life-altering and can trigger a cascading series of financial and social crises. With little time or opportunity to rebuild, retirees and other older victims may face immediate, consequential decisions about maintaining their current standard of living. They might be forced to sell a family home, move in with adult children, turn to social support not previously needed or completely reimagine their financial picture and their future. Medical expenses that were previously manageable could become unaffordable, forcing difficult choices. These cascading social and financial disruptions are profoundly destabilizing, particularly for those in their final decades of life. The loss forces the dismantling of the life they built, the independence they maintained and the security they counted on. The damage can extend to severe psychological trauma, and even health and mortality consequences.

³ Federal Trade Commission, "The Rising Scam Economy: Modernizing Federal Approaches to Protect Americans from Foreign Fraudsters." Prepared statement before the U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee, Washington, D.C., March 25, 2026. https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/ftc-testimony-iec-hearing-on-the-rising-scam-economy.pdf.

⁴ Federal Trade Commission, *Protecting Older Consumers 2024–2025* (Oct. 18, 2024), available at https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/federal-trade-commission-protecting-older-adults-report_102024.pdf.

⁵ Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Federal Bureau of Investigation Internet Crime Report 2024* (2024), available at https://www.ic3.gov/AnnualReport/Reports/2024_IC3Report.pdf.

⁶ Federal Trade Commission, *Protecting Older Consumers 2024–2025* (December 1, 2025), available at https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/P144400-OlderAdultsReportDec2025.pdf.

⁷ Federal Trade Commission, "The Rising Scam Economy: Modernizing Federal Approaches to Protect Americans from Foreign Fraudsters." Prepared statement before the U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee, Washington, D.C., March 25, 2026. See https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/ftc-testimony-iec-hearing-on-the-rising-scam-economy.pdf.

The risk is extensive: A 2023 study in the JAMA Network Open (published by the Journal of the American Medical Association) found that approximately 16 percent of older adults in the sample (drawn from participants in the Rush Memory and Aging Project, which is funded by the National Institute on Aging) interacted with a simulated government impersonation scam without skepticism or provided personal information that could compromise their identity or accounts.⁸ When extrapolated nationally, this suggests millions of older Americans are actively vulnerable to fraud victimization.

Given what is at stake, enhancing financial literacy among older Americans is not merely beneficial—it is urgent and essential.

Financial Literacy Preserves Assets, Independence, Health and Cognitive Function

Financial literacy is critically important for older adults because it serves as a protective barrier that extends far beyond simple money management. A body of research by the FINRA Foundation⁹ and numerous collaborators has demonstrated that higher financial literacy levels are strongly associated with better retirement outcomes, greater resilience to financial shocks, reduced financial anxiety and improved financial satisfaction. Importantly, financial literacy can meaningfully improve decision-making even as cognition naturally declines with age.

A study by the FINRA Foundation, the Global Financial Literacy Education Center and the University of Southern California found adults with higher initial financial literacy at the outset were more likely to plan for retirement, afford an unexpected expense of \$2,000 and experience financial satisfaction six years later.¹⁰ In addition, findings from the State-by-State Survey component of the FINRA Foundation’s National Financial Capability Study (NFCS)¹¹ have indicated a strong link between increased financial literacy and a host of positive outcomes.¹²

Individuals with higher levels of financial literacy are:

- more likely to have an easier time making ends meet and to be spending less than their income;
- more likely to have rainy day funds and better positioned to manage unexpected expenses;

⁸ L. Yu, G. Mottola, C.N. Kieffer, R. Mascio, O. Valdes, D.A. Bennett & P.A. Boyle, *Vulnerability of Older Adults to Government Impersonation Scams*, JAMA Network Open e2335319 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.35319>.

⁹ See www.finrafoundation.org/research-center.

¹⁰ M. Angrisani, J. Burke, A. Lusardi & G. Mottola, The Evolution of Financial Literacy Over Time and Its Predictive Power for Financial Outcomes: Evidence from Longitudinal Data, 22 J. Pension Econ. & Fin. 640 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474747222000154>.

¹¹ In 2009, the FINRA Foundation launched the first national study of the financial capability of adults in the United States. The National Financial Capability Study (NFCS) is fielded every three years, with the most recent wave fielded in 2024. See <https://www.finrafoundation.org/national-financial-capability-study>.

¹² Lin, J. T., Bumcrot, C., Lusardi, A., Valdes, O., Mottola, G., Ganem, R., Sarver, S., Kieffer, C., McLaughlin, R., & Walsh, G. (2025). *Financial Capability in the United States: Results from the FINRA Foundation’s National Financial Capability Study* (6th Edition). FINRA Foundation. www.finrafoundation.org/NFCSReport2024.

- less likely to rely upon high-cost, non-bank borrowing methods; and
- less likely to experience financial anxiety.

To gain insight into the role of aging and cognition on financial and health decision-making, the FINRA Foundation collaborated with neuroscientists and researchers at Rush University Medical Center on a series of studies. Overall, the research collaboration suggested that taking steps to maintain or improve financial literacy in older age may prove beneficial to financial decision-making—even amid cognitive aging. Importantly, having a lower starting level of financial and health literacy was associated with poorer decision-making, and while some degree of decreasing literacy is common as we age, the rate of the decline is important.¹³ Those who experienced *faster rates of decline* in financial literacy—independent of baseline cognitive abilities—were more likely to make poor decisions, have higher susceptibility to scams and financial fraud, and experience lower levels of psychological well-being.

Financial literacy might even preserve brain health. The FINRA Foundation–Rush University research collaboration found associations between perceptions of one’s own skills and neurological health. Beyond objective financial literacy, confidence in one’s financial literacy skills was associated with a decreased risk of Alzheimer’s dementia and slower decline in cognition—a potential signal of the importance of maintaining financial engagement.¹⁴ The team also found that older adults who *misperceive* their own cognitive abilities (whether overestimating or underestimating) were found to make significantly poorer financial decisions than those with more accurate self-awareness.¹⁵ Even still, higher financial literacy played a greater role in quality of financial decision-making than memory misperceptions.

In essence, increased financial literacy functions as an indispensable buffer to the predictable and unpredictable challenges of aging. It is critical, not merely for managing money, but for preserving independence, health and cognitive function in our most vulnerable time.

FINRA’s Commitment to Building Financial Literacy

The FINRA Foundation advances financial literacy and capability by building programs and partnerships that help Americans in communities across the country learn about money management and investing, plan for the future, and make informed decisions about financial products and services.

¹³ L. Yu, G. Mottola, D.A. Bennett & P.A. Boyle, Adverse Impacts of Declining Financial and Health Literacy in Old Age, 29 Am. J. Geriatric Psychiatry 1129 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jagp.2021.02.042>.

¹⁴ L. Yu, P. Boyle & G. Mottola, *Confidence in Financial Literacy and Cognitive Health in Older Persons*, FINRA Investor Education Foundation (Sept. 2020), available at https://www.finrafoundation.org/sites/finrafoundation/files/confidence-in-financial-literacy-and-cognitive-health-in-older-persons_1.pdf.

¹⁵ L. Yu, O. Valdes, P. Boyle & G. Mottola, *What You Don’t Know Can Hurt You: Misjudging Memory Skills Can Adversely Impact Financial Decision Making in Old Age*, FINRA Investor Education Foundation (Feb. 2022), available at https://www.finrafoundation.org/sites/finrafoundation/files/2024-10/Insights-Brief-Memory-Unawareness_1.pdf.

For many years, the Foundation worked with the American Library Association and others to build the capacity of public libraries to address the financial education and information needs of their communities.¹⁶ To this end, the FINRA Foundation made in excess of \$10.5 million in grants, often coupled with training for library professionals, to enable financial education experiences that align with these characteristics. Libraries that received these grants delivered thousands of free programs and services that incorporated multiple ways of learning across a range of settings, both in and outside of library facilities.

For adults still in the workforce, the workplace is often an ideal setting for financial education, especially if it is done in ways that address both employer and employee needs. For a dozen years, the Foundation has collaborated with United Way Worldwide on an initiative known as Financial Wellness at Work.¹⁷ This program leverages the workplace as a platform for helping low- and moderate-income employees achieve financial stability and make progress toward longer-term financial goals, both for themselves and their families. Through this initiative, employees benefit from financial education and coaching that respects their need for privacy. They also receive resource coordination and access to consumer-friendly financial products and services to help them reduce debt and build assets. Because these services are delivered at the worksite and coordinated with employers, common barriers to participation in financial education—such as lack of available after-hours childcare, additional transportation costs or simply a lack of time—are greatly reduced. Employers benefit from a workforce that is less stressed by personal finance challenges that may affect job performance, result in hardship withdrawals from retirement savings plans and contribute to excessive employee turnover.

FINRA and the FINRA Foundation also directly provide free, unbiased information and tools to help all Americans better understand basic principles of investing and the markets, making them better-informed investors.

These resources include:

- a retirement education center on FINRA.org¹⁸ that features comprehensive information on both the accumulation and decumulation phases of retirement, as well as content on different ways to save for retirement;
- a calculator¹⁹ to help people maximize employer matching contributions; and
- a tool²⁰ to help retirees understand and navigate required minimum distributions from traditional IRAs and qualified employer-sponsored retirement accounts.

¹⁶ See <https://smartinvesting.ala.org>.

¹⁷ See <https://finrafoundation.org/people-we-help/financial-wellness-work>.

¹⁸ See <https://www.finra.org/investors/investing/investment-accounts/retirement-accounts>.

¹⁹ See <https://max401kcalculator.nga.finra.org/calculator/#/>.

²⁰ See <https://rmdcalculator.nga.finra.org/#/>.

In addition, we offer:

- FINRA BrokerCheck,²¹ a free tool that provides investors with a quick way to check whether investment professionals and firms are licensed and to check a broker's professional background and disciplinary history;
- a fund analyzer²² that allows investors to compare the impact of fees, expenses and discounts on mutual fund and exchange-traded fund values;
- a fixed income data center²³ with comprehensive, real-time access to fixed income security and trade information, as well as investor education content on bonds;
- a series of online micro-courses²⁴ that cover essential topics for new investors—from setting investment goals to understanding risk and return; and
- Investor Insights articles²⁵ that explain, in plain language, emerging products, concerning fraud schemes, popular investing strategies, current market trends and other topics of interest to retail investors, both novice and advanced.

Many of FINRA's recent publications have tackled such topics as tips for managing money after the loss of a spouse, how to spot and avoid relationship investment scams, and factors to consider when choosing between a brokerage or advisory account.

Financial Literacy Must be Coupled with Persuasion Literacy and Scam Awareness to Bolster Defenses

Financial literacy has a role to play in fraud and scam vulnerability.

- Older adults with lower baseline financial and health literacy are more susceptible to scams.^{26,27}
- Financial fragility and financial insecurity are correlated with a higher likelihood of engagement with and losses due to scams.²⁸
- Low levels of financial literacy, as well as social isolation, are associated with engaging with and losing money to scams.²⁹

²¹ See <https://brokercheck.finra.org>.

²² See https://tools.finra.org/fund_analyzer.

²³ See <https://www.finra.org/finra-data/fixed-income>.

²⁴ See <https://www.finra.org/investors/investing/investing-basics/smart-investing-courses>.

²⁵ See <https://www.finra.org/investors/insights>.

²⁶ Yu et al., *Adverse Impacts of Declining Financial and Health Literacy in Old Age*, supra note 4.

²⁷ L. Yu, G. Mottola, L.L. Barnes, S.D. Han, R.S. Wilson, D.A. Bennett & P.A. Boyle, *Correlates of Susceptibility to Scams in Community-Dwelling Older Black Adults*, 67 *Gerontology* 729 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1159/000515326>.

²⁸ L. Yu, O. Valdes, P. Boyle & G. Mottola, *Who's at Risk? Financial Fragility May Put Older Adults at Risk for Scams*, Insights: Financial Capability (July 2022), available at <https://finrafoundation.org/sites/finrafoundation/files/2024-10/Financial-Fragility-Research-Brief.pdf>.

²⁹ M. DeLiema, E. Fletcher, C.N. Kieffer, G.R. Mottola, R. Pessanha & M. Trumpower, *Exposed to Scams: What Separates Victims from Non-Victims?*, FINRA Investor Education Foundation, BBB Institute for Marketplace Trust & Stanford Center on Longevity (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1080/08946566.2022.2070568>.

However, financial literacy is not the only important factor in preventing losses due to fraud and scams, and even those with higher degrees of financial literacy need additional fortification to protect their assets. Of equal importance is *persuasion literacy* and *scam awareness* which, collectively, can empower seniors to resist emotional manipulation, recognize red flags and protect their assets.

Knowing about scams and scammer tactics can be a person's best defense in successfully thwarting a scam attempt. Scams come in countless forms, but beneath the surface, fraudsters use variations of the same playbook. They often rely on a remarkably small number of persuasion tactics, attempting to exploit psychological vulnerabilities using claims of urgency or (false) authority or promises of wealth. These tactics are designed to heighten emotions and suspend rational judgment, impairing decision-making. And older adults might be particularly vulnerable to the dangerous effects of heightened emotions on decision making.³⁰

Persuasion literacy can be thought of as the ability to analyze and evaluate incoming communications for these persuasive techniques—whether deployed in a legitimate sales pitch or a fraudulent scheme—in order to facilitate rational, rather than emotionally-driven, decisions. Persuasion literacy builds pattern recognition skills that can be applied to different schemes that employ similar tactics. In the context of a scam, the ability to detect the warning signs of a high-pressure pitch can be a critical skill that ultimately protects an individual from victimization.³¹

A number of studies support the idea that knowledge—including how scams work and how to recognize red flags—can be an important protective agent. Lack of knowledge about scams, on the other hand, can leave consumers at high risk. For instance, in a behavioral experiment in which older adults were exposed to a realistic government impersonation scam, those who interacted with the scam without skepticism or provided personal information also scored lowest on a scam awareness measure.³² Yet other studies support this same finding: Lack of prior knowledge of a scam increases the risk of loss.³³ Thus, education about specific scams and scammer tactics could be a powerful protective factor even across a wide range of schemes.

³⁰ In a study conducted by the Stanford Center on Longevity in collaboration with the FINRA Foundation, subjects were induced to exhibit excitement or anger, with a neutral control group, and then presented with advertisements that had been designated by the FTC as misleading. In older adults, both excitement and anger increased intention to purchase an item compared to no emotional arousal. In younger adults, however, there were no significant differences in intention to purchase, suggesting that heightened emotion did not influence younger adults' susceptibility. The findings suggest that older adults' intention to purchase was not based on perceived credibility, but rather on the emotional states they were experiencing. See K. Kircanski, N. Notthoff, D. Shadel, G. Mottola, L.L. Carstensen & I.H. Gotlib, *Heightened Emotional States Increase Susceptibility to Fraud in Older Adults*, Stanford Center on Longevity (2016), available at <https://www.finrafoundation.org/sites/finrafoundation/files/2024-10/heightened-emotional-states-fraud-susceptibility.pdf>.

³¹ DeLiema et al., *Exposed to Scams*, supra note 13.

³² Yu et al., *Vulnerability of Older Adults to Government Impersonation Scams*, supra note 10.

³³ A study by the FINRA Foundation, University of Minnesota and RTI International found that while risk factors for responding to and losing money to a scam generally varied across scam types, three common risk factors for most

U.S. adults have substantial gaps in both awareness and understanding of different types of financial fraud. When asked to name the types of fraud they were familiar with, half of the respondents in a forthcoming study by RAND and the FINRA Foundation mentioned identity-based fraud—scams involving a victim’s identity—while fewer than one in five mentioned other significant fraud schemes.³⁴ Although those with higher financial literacy were more likely to mention other fraud types, significant knowledge gaps persist across the population, further underscoring the need for targeted scam awareness education.

Complicating matters, many are overconfident in their ability to detect warning signs. To deepen our understanding of consumers’ ability to detect signs of fraud, the FINRA Foundation conducted a short study that presented a hypothetical investment pitch.³⁵ Despite consumers’ widespread confidence in their ability to spot financial fraud, their fraud detection abilities did not match this confidence. Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of consumers indicated that they would invest, despite multiple red flags for investment fraud. And while older consumers were less likely to indicate interest in this potentially fraudulent opportunity, more than half (59 percent) of those 50 and over indicated they definitely or probably would invest in the “opportunity.”

Educational interventions that build persuasion literacy are a promising strategy to protect consumers. Even short, online educational interventions about persuasion tactics and red flags can increase both consumers’ ability to recognize fraudulent opportunities and their knowledge about investment fraud without diminishing interest in legitimate investment products.³⁶ These protective effects decay over time, however. To maintain effectiveness, scam prevention messaging must be disseminated through a wide array of channels, with regular frequency.

scam types were lack of prior knowledge of the scam, loneliness, and believing the fraudster/organization seemed “official.” See M. DeLiema, Y. Li, M.K. Taylor & G.R. Mottola, *Does One Size Fit All? An Examination of Risk Factors by Scam Type*, Insights: Financial Capability (Nov. 2022), available at <https://finrafoundation.org/sites/finrafoundation/files/Does-One-Size-Fit-All-An-Examination-of-Risk-Factors-by-Scam-Type-Brief.pdf>.

³⁴ D. Basaran Sahin et al., “Capturing Adults’ Familiarity with Financial Fraud: Relationships with Targeting, Engagement, and Victimization” (revised manuscript submitted to *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 2026). Forthcoming issue brief from the FINRA Foundation and RAND will be published at www.finrafoundation.org/research-center.

³⁵ A. Fontes, O. Valdes, G. Mottola, R. Ganem & S. Green, *Confident You Can Detect Financial Fraud? Think Again*, Consumer Insights: Money & Investing (Mar. 2026), available at https://finrafoundation.org/sites/finrafoundation/files/2026-03/Consumer_Insights_Brief_Confident_You_Can_Detect_Fraud_Think_Again.pdf.

³⁶ A collaborative study between the FINRA Foundation and the University of Southern California’s Center for Economic and Social Research (CESR) experimentally examined the effectiveness of short, online educational interventions in reducing susceptibility to fraud. The interventions increased both consumers’ ability to recognize fraudulent investment opportunities and their knowledge about investment fraud without diminishing respondent interest in legitimate investment products. While initial effects decayed over time, they persisted for at least three months with support from a secondary intervention. See J. Burke, F. Perez-Arce, C. Kieffer, R. Mascio, G. Mottola & O. Valdes, *Can Educational Interventions Reduce Susceptibility to Financial Fraud?*, Insights: Financial Capability (Mar. 2021), available at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3747165.

It is important to recognize that while the ultimate goal of a financial fraud scheme is to steal money or assets, the means is largely through emotional manipulation. Accordingly, when financial fraud strikes, the damage extends far beyond dollars lost. FINRA Foundation research shows that two-thirds of fraud victims experience serious social-emotional consequences, including anxiety, depression and sleep disruption.³⁷ Within the first year after a scam, victims often report escalating feelings of depression, exhaustion, anger, shame and pervasive distrust.³⁸ These wounds are frequently hidden from sight, and they can have tremendous negative impacts on both psychological well-being and physical health. Protecting older Americans from these downstream effects is as important as protecting their assets.

FINRA'S Sustained Commitment to Holistic Fraud Prevention Measures

Tackling an issue as complex as financial fraud requires a multi-faceted, collaborative and sustained approach. As such, the FINRA Foundation maintains a range of partnerships with consumer organizations, securities regulators, law enforcement, victim advocates and other stakeholders to scale the impact of our work. FINRA actively participated in the Federal Trade Commission's Scams Against Older Adults Advisory Group, an initiative launched in 2022 under the Stop Senior Scams Act.³⁹ Most recently, we joined dozens of leaders across the public sector, industry and civil society in developing a national strategy to prevent scams as part of the Aspen Institute's National Task Force on Fraud and Scam Prevention.⁴⁰

Through this network of national, state and grassroots partnerships, the FINRA Foundation develops and distributes fraud prevention resources, conducts outreach and trains consumers and professionals alike to detect, prevent and respond to financial fraud.⁴¹ The Foundation's education efforts focus not just on specific scams but on building skills to identify and resist scams, more broadly, with an emphasis on persuasion literacy and red flag awareness.

Since 2008, the Foundation has:

- enabled, conducted and disseminated critical research to understand fraud prevalence, mechanics and victim impact, as well as behavioral, neurological and demographic risk factors;
- delivered evidence-based fraud prevention education to more than 286,000 consumers;
- trained nearly 28,500 professionals (including law enforcement officers, social workers, mental health professionals and victim advocates) to detect, prevent and respond to financial fraud and scams;
- counseled 4.2 million seniors through Foundation-supported fraud fighter call centers;

³⁷ See https://www.finrafoundation.org/sites/finrafoundation/files/non-traditional-costs-financial-fraud_0_0.pdf.

³⁸ See https://finrafoundation.org/sites/finrafoundation/files/Fraud_Victim_Journey_Map.pdf.

³⁹ See <https://consumer.ftc.gov/features/addressing-scams-affecting-older-adults>.

⁴⁰ See <https://fraudtaskforce.aspeninstitute.org/nationalstrategy>.

⁴¹ See <https://finrafoundation.org/empowering-fraud-fighters>.

- cultivated free, counselor-led support programs for scam victims to work through the loss, embarrassment and isolation that can accompany victimization;
- fostered relationships with national, state and local organizations and coalitions to encourage collaboration in the fight against financial fraud and exploitation;
- developed a range of fraud awareness and prevention resources, including a nationally distributed public television documentary and interactive, online game; and
- advanced FINRA initiatives, including facilitating dialogue with and developing resources for member firms to help them better protect themselves and investors from harm caused by third-party scams.⁴²

FINRA also regularly shares fraud prevention and scam awareness information via both FINRA and Foundation social media channels.⁴³ For example, FINRA has collaborated with numerous industry regulators and organizations, including the SEC, CFTC, FBI and others, on targeted social media campaigns focused on increasing awareness of specific scams⁴⁴ or on adding a trusted contact⁴⁵ to investment accounts.

Prevention is an important part of combating financial fraud. However, fraud claims victims despite preventive methods. Scammers deliberately target those already victimized, capitalizing on emotional distress, shame and desperation. Without intervention, cascading losses compound the trauma, and the vulnerability window remains open.

This is why the FINRA Foundation is collaborating with two nonprofit organizations to develop a network of peer support programs for fraud victims.⁴⁶ Peer support helps close this window by addressing the psychological conditions that made the individual a target. Individuals who feel seen, safe and understood are less vulnerable than those with no community to lean on for emotional support. Effective peer support combines mental health counseling with actionable guidance: reporting fraud, securing accounts, spotting red flags, and addressing practical needs like financial insecurity and identity theft recovery. Victims who once needed urgent support become survivors who are more stable and resilient. Their dependency on crisis services decreases and their vulnerability to future exploitation narrows. Recovery isn't simply a response to fraud. It's a powerful tool to prevent fraud from happening again in the future.

⁴² See <https://www.finra.org/rules-guidance/key-topics/scam-prevention-assistance-resources>.

⁴³ See <https://www.facebook.com/FinancialIndustryRegulatoryAuthority>, <https://www.facebook.com/FinraFoundation>, <https://www.instagram.com/finraofficial>.

⁴⁴ See https://www.finra.org/sites/default/files/2026-03/ABA_Foundation_Government_Imposter_Scams_Infographic.pdf, <https://www.finra.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024-ABA-Cryptocurrency-Infographic-Printable.pdf>

⁴⁵ See <https://www.finra.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/trusted-contact-infographic.pdf>.

⁴⁶ See <https://finrafoundation.org/assisting-victims-fraud>.

FINRA's Regulatory Initiatives Advance Senior Investor Protection

FINRA has long been committed to protecting senior investors and combating financial fraud through a combination of regulation, investor education and assistance, and collaboration with member firms, state and federal agencies, and investor-protection advocates.⁴⁷ Among other efforts, FINRA provides its member firms and their professionals with a suite of tools and training to help stop fraud at the front lines. FINRA also detects potential fraud through its core regulatory programs, intervenes where it can, and refers other matters to regulators and law enforcement authorities. These efforts have become increasingly important as scams, fraud and financial exploitation have surged in recent years, driven in part by technological advances that enable sophisticated criminal schemes targeting investors of all ages.

In 2025, FINRA launched *FINRA Forward*, a series of initiatives to further improve its effectiveness and efficiency in pursuing its mission.⁴⁸ *FINRA Forward* represents a sustained, multi-year commitment to modernizing its regulatory approach, including redoubling efforts across its programs to prevent or stop fraud. Key initiatives include modernizing FINRA's rules; empowering member firm compliance; combating cybersecurity and fraud risks; and conducting an outside review of and making enhancements to its enforcement program.^{49,50}

Combating Cybersecurity and Fraud Risks Through Shared Intelligence

Today's cybersecurity and fraud threats aren't isolated incidents—they are sophisticated operations orchestrated by organized criminals and even nation states. This new reality demands that we respond not as individual organizations, but as a unified industry with shared intelligence and coordinated defenses. FINRA is applying this perspective to create practical tools that firms can use to protect themselves and their clients from emerging threats.

Towards that end, on March 31 of this year, FINRA launched the Financial Intelligence Fusion Center (FIFC).^{51, 52} The FIFC provides a secure portal where member firms can receive timely, actionable cybersecurity and fraud threat intelligence to further protect their customers and their businesses.⁵³ The FIFC will also leverage FINRA's existing relationships, enabling input from government and private sector stakeholders. It expands the range of resources FINRA provides its members, including guidance for establishing cybersecurity programs, addressing vulnerabilities, combating cyber-enabled fraud, and identifying emerging scams, among others.

⁴⁷ See <https://www.finra.org/rules-guidance/key-topics/senior-investors>.

⁴⁸ See <https://www.finra.org/media-center/newsreleases/2025/finra-announces-new-finra-forward-initiatives>.

⁴⁹ See <https://www.finra.org/about/finra-forward>.

⁵⁰ See <https://www.finra.org/media-center/blog/finra-forward-in-enforcement>.

⁵¹ See <https://www.finra.org/media-center/newsreleases/2026/finra-launches-financial-intelligence-fusion-center-combat>.

⁵² Listen to FINRA's Podcast on Building Cybersecurity Resilience Through FINRA Forward, <https://www.finra.org/media-center/finra-unscripted/building-cybersecurity-resilience-through-finra-forward>.

⁵³ See <https://www.finra.org/filing-reporting/fifc>.

Directly Assisting Investors Through the FINRA Securities Helpline for Seniors

FINRA also provides resources and tools for investors to help resolve potential problems. For example, FINRA's Securities Helpline for Seniors® (Senior Helpline) is a toll-free number that investors can call to get assistance from FINRA or raise concerns about issues with brokerage accounts and investments.⁵⁴ Member firms also often proactively contact the Helpline to share concerns and discuss ways to help their customers. The Helpline is managed by a specialized internal team, the Vulnerable Adults and Seniors Team (VAST).

Callers to the Senior Helpline (844-57-HELPS or 844-574-3577) report a wide range of issues. In some cases, FINRA has been able to provide the senior investors or their families with enough information and understanding of brokerage operations that they can help themselves. In other instances, FINRA has directly worked with firms or helped seniors work with firms to be made whole. In its first 10 years, the Senior Helpline assisted in recovering more than \$9.3 million for investors.⁵⁵ The Helpline has increasingly received calls about potential romance, confidence, imposter and crypto asset scams. When appropriate, VAST members file reports with state or local Adult Protective Services (APS) agencies and make referrals to state, federal and international agencies. VAST members also work within FINRA's Regulatory Operations to investigate and, where appropriate, bring disciplinary actions in senior-specific financial exploitation and sales practice cases involving FINRA member firms.

Modernizing Rules to Protect Senior Investors

FINRA's Senior Helpline has highlighted issues relating to financial exploitation of senior and vulnerable investors, including the need for member firms to quickly and effectively address suspected financial exploitation of seniors and other specified adults. In response, and through extensive engagement with the public and market participants, FINRA has developed a regulatory framework designed to provide member firms with flexible tools to protect senior and vulnerable investors from financial exploitation.

In 2018, FINRA implemented two key rules for protecting senior investors and other vulnerable adults.

- The *trusted contact rule* (FINRA [Rule 4512](https://www.finra.org/rules-guidance/rulebooks/finra-rules/4512)) requires members to make reasonable efforts to obtain the name of and contact information for a trusted contact person upon the opening of all non-institutional customer accounts. The trusted contact is intended to be a resource for the member in a host of situations (*e.g.*, helping to update contact information when a customer becomes unavailable, offering assistance when concerns arise over possible diminished capacity or other health issues, protecting assets and responding to possible financial exploitation).⁵⁶

⁵⁴ See <https://www.finra.org/investors/need-help/helpline-seniors>.

⁵⁵ See <https://www.finra.org/media-center/newsreleases/2025/finra-securities-helpline-seniors-marks-10th-anniversary-more-93>.

⁵⁶ See <https://www.finra.org/rules-guidance/rulebooks/finra-rules/4512>.

- The *temporary hold rule* ([FINRA Rule 2165](#)) is the first uniform national standard for placing temporary holds on disbursements and transactions to address suspected financial exploitation. More specifically, the rule permits a member to place a temporary hold, with stated time limits, on a securities transaction or disbursement of funds or securities from the account of a senior or other adult with an impairment (“specified adult”⁵⁷) when the member reasonably believes that financial exploitation of that adult has occurred, is occurring, has been attempted or will be attempted. The rule currently permits a temporary hold up to a maximum of 55 business days unless otherwise terminated or extended by a relevant state agency or court.⁵⁸

To enhance coordination across sectors, FINRA also partners with the National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA) and APS offices across the U.S. to provide education on the financial services industry, fraud trends and the role that FINRA Rule 2165 serves in halting suspected financial exploitation.

FINRA is widely reviewing its rules and guidance under *FINRA Forward* to ensure that they remain relevant and effective. To that end, FINRA issued Regulatory Notice 26-02 soliciting feedback on proposed rule modernization changes to further assist member firms in protecting customers from fraud and financial exploitation.⁵⁹

Proposed updates include:

- *Trusted Contact Amendments (pertaining to FINRA Rule 4512)* permitting member firms to use the alternative term “emergency contact” and to provide additional flexibility for a customer to name a trusted or emergency contact for use across all the customer’s accounts at the member firm.
- *Temporary Hold Amendments (pertaining to FINRA Rule 2165)* extending the maximum temporary hold period under Rule 2165 from 55 business days to 145 business days, in three 30-business day increments, subject to safeguards, plus additional modifications that provide enhanced clarity and flexibility to make the rule more effective.
- *New “Speed Bump” for Suspected Fraud (proposed new FINRA Rule 2166)* offering member firms a tool to protect all customers (irrespective of age or capacity) by permitting a temporary delay of up to five business days on disbursements or transactions when there is a reasonable belief of fraud. This separate safe harbor framework, modeled on FINRA Rule 2165, would permit member firms to use a “speed bump” to alert a customer of suspected fraud.

FINRA staff are currently reviewing comments on these proposed changes.

⁵⁷ A “specified adult” is defined as a natural person age 65 and older or a natural person age 18 and older who the member reasonably believes has a mental or physical impairment that renders the individual unable to protect his or her own interests.

⁵⁸ See <https://www.finra.org/rules-guidance/rulebooks/finra-rules/2165>.

⁵⁹ See <https://www.finra.org/rules-guidance/notices/26-02>.

Training for Securities Firms and Professionals on Detecting and Preventing Exploitation

FINRA also supports training for those within the securities industry to advance understanding of issues related to financial exploitation, cognitive aging and financial decision-making. The Senior Safe Act⁶⁰, enacted in 2018, is an important law that assists in the protection of older Americans who are saving and investing in the nation's financial markets. Specifically, the law ensures that covered financial institutions, including investment advisers, broker-dealers and transfer agents, and their eligible employees can report on potential exploitation of seniors to a covered agency without potential barriers that could stem from liability for that action. In furtherance of the intent of this law, together with the North American Securities Administrators Association (NASAA) and SEC staff, FINRA provides a resource that securities firms may use to train associated persons⁶¹ about how to detect, prevent and report financial exploitation of senior and vulnerable adult investors, as well as a list of key senior investor protection resources⁶² for member firms.

Moreover, FINRA incorporates training for the industry on senior investor protection issues through in-person and virtual programming. This includes through the FINRA Annual Conference, periodic Senior Investor Protection Conferences and Financial Crimes and Cybersecurity Conferences, among other events.⁶³ FINRA's Crypto and Blockchain Education Program equips financial professionals with a comprehensive education to understand crypto assets and blockchain technology.⁶⁴ FINRA also oversees the securities industry continuing education program which includes administration of mandatory training for over 634,000 registered persons. New in 2026 is an updated course on disrupting the cycle of fraud and understanding scam trends.⁶⁵ The training leans heavily into the FINRA Foundation's work teaching trauma-informed practices and ways to avoid victim blaming. Finally, FINRA maintains a catalog of e-learning courses for firms to use in furtherance of their training programs. A number of these courses address diminished capacity, vulnerable populations and exploitation of senior investors.

Conclusion

This testimony illustrates that financial literacy, when combined with persuasion literacy and scam awareness education, serves as a multifaceted shield protecting not only older Americans' assets but also their autonomy, cognitive health and overall well-being.

By supporting evidence-based educational initiatives tailored to the specific vulnerabilities and needs of older adults, we can equip millions of seniors with the information and confidence

⁶⁰ *Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act*, Section 303, Public Law 115-174.

⁶¹ FINRA, *Addressing and Reporting Financial Exploitation of Senior and Vulnerable Adult Investors* (June 2023) available at <https://www.finra.org/rules-guidance/key-topics/senior-investors/elder-abuse-prevention-training>.

⁶² See https://www.finra.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/Senior_Investor_Protection_Resources_for_Broker-Dealers.pdf.

⁶³ See <https://www.finra.org/events-training/conferences-events/2026-financial-crimes-cybersecurity-conference>.

⁶⁴ See <https://www.finra.org/events-training/FINRA-crypto-and-blockchain-education-program>.

⁶⁵ See <https://www.finra.org/registration-exams-ce/continuing-education/regulatory-element-topics>.

necessary to safeguard their savings, recognize scams and preserve the quality of life they have earned. This protective work is urgent. It matters not only in older age, but *as we age*.

Building a financially capable America across the lifespan is a lofty goal, and it requires collaborative and sustained efforts to achieve. FINRA and the FINRA Foundation are committed to bolstering the financial literacy, persuasion literacy and scam awareness of all Americans.

Thank you again for inviting me to testify today about these important issues. I am pleased to answer any questions you might have.

Appendix:
FINRA and FINRA Foundation Resources
Regarding Seniors and Vulnerable Adults

Summary of FINRA’s Senior Investor Protection Efforts

- Key Topics, [Senior Investors](#)

Helplines & Scam Support Groups for Consumers

- FINRA [Securities Helpline for Seniors](#)
- Give an Hour [Support Programs for Fraud Victims and Families](#) (enabled by the FINRA Foundation)
- FightCybercrime [Scam Recovery Groups](#) (enabled by the FINRA Foundation)

Selected FINRA Foundation Research

(For more, visit www.finrafoundation.org/research-center)

Financial Capability & Financial Literacy

- [Influencer Followers and Social Media Scrollers: The Profile, Patterns and Pitfalls of Social-Media-Informed Retail Investors](#). (2026). Authored by FINRA and the FINRA Foundation.
- [Financial Capability in the United States: Results from FINRA Foundation’s National Financial Capability Study](#). (2025). Authored by researchers from the FINRA Foundation, Meridian Research & Insights and Stanford University.
- [Investors in the United States Results from the National Financial Capability Study](#). (2025). Authored by researchers from the FINRA Foundation and Meridian Research & Insights.
- [Does the Gender Gap in Financial and Health Literacy Close as We Age? Apparently Not](#). (2025). Authored by researchers from the FINRA Foundation, Rush University Medical Center and The Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania.
- [The Stability and Predictive Power of Financial Literacy: Evidence from Longitudinal Data](#). (2020). Authored by researchers at the FINRA Foundation, University of California’s Center for Economic and Social Research, and George Washington University’s Global Financial Literacy Excellence Center.

Aging & Financial Decision Making

- [Feeling Good, Staying Sharp: Psychological Wellbeing May Slow Financial and Health Literacy Decline in Older Adults](#). (2023). Authored by researchers from the FINRA Foundation, Rush University Medical Center and Indiana University School of Medicine.
- [Who’s at Risk? Financial Fragility May Put Older Adults at Risk for Scams](#). (2022). Authored by researchers at the FINRA Foundation and Rush University Medical Center.

- [*What You Don't Know Can Hurt You: Misjudging Memory Skills Can Adversely Impact Financial Decision Making in Old Age*](#). (2022). Authored by researchers at the FINRA Foundation and Rush University Medical Center.
- [*Race and Scam Susceptibility: Key Risk Factors for Older African Americans*](#). (2021). Authored by researchers from the FINRA Foundation and Rush University Medical Center.
- [*The Relation of Loneliness and Cognition with Financial and Healthcare Decision Making in Older Persons*](#). (2021). Authored by researchers from the FINRA Foundation, Rush University Medical Center and Indiana University School of Medicine.
- [*Does Overconfidence Increase Financial Risk Taking in Older Age?*](#) (2020). Authored by researchers at the FINRA Foundation, Duke University, and Rush University Medical Center.
- [*Confidence in Financial Literacy and Cognitive Health in Older Persons*](#). (2020). Authored by researchers at the FINRA Foundation and Rush University Medical Center.
- [*The Adverse Impacts of Declining Financial Literacy in Old Age*](#). (2020). Authored by researchers at the FINRA Foundation and Rush University Medical Center.

Consumer Financial Fraud

- [*Vulnerability of Older Adults to Government Impersonation Scams*](#). (2023). Authored by researchers at the FINRA Foundation and Rush University Medical Center.
- [*Confident you can detect fraud? Think again*](#). (2026). Authored by researchers from the FINRA Foundation.
- [*United We Stand: A National Strategy to Prevent Scams*](#). (2025). A report from the Aspen Institute's National Task Force on Fraud and Scam Prevention.
- [*Exposed to Scams: What Beliefs About the World are Associated with Fraud Victimization?*](#) (2025). Authored by researchers from the FINRA Foundation, BBB Institute for Marketplace Trust, University of Minnesota, University of Virginia and the Good People Research Company.
- [*Do older adults' "routine activities" increase fraud risk? An analysis of the factors that might affect the risk of fraud victimization*](#). (2025). Authored by researchers from the FINRA Foundation, University of Minnesota and RTI International.
- [*Does It Help to Worry? Exploring the Association Between Worry About Investment Fraud and Investing Behavior*](#). (2024). Authored by researchers from FINRA, the FINRA Foundation and University of Rhode Island.
- [*Does One Size Fit All An Examination of Risk Factors by Scam Type*](#). (2022). Authored by researchers from the FINRA Foundation, University of Minnesota and Duke University.
- [*Blame and Shame in the Context of Financial Fraud*](#). (2022). Authored by the FINRA Foundation, AARP and Heart+Mind Strategies.

Scam Awareness Campaigns Aimed at Consumers

- Trusted Contact [Video](#) and [Fact Sheet](#) (by FINRA, SEC Staff and NASAA)
- Infographic: [Government Imposter Scams](#) (by ABA Foundation, FINRA, SEC staff, CFTC, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Department of Justice, FinCEN and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service)
- Infographic: [Crypto Investment Scams](#) (by ABA Foundation, FINRA, SEC staff, CFTC, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Department of Justice, Homeland Security Investigations IRS-CI)

Selected FINRA Investor Insights

(For more, visit <https://www.finra.org/investors/insights>)

- [Customer Account Takeovers: What They Are and How to Protect Yourself](#) (April 2026)
- [4 Tips to Know Before Buying Physical Precious Metals](#) (March 2026)
- [Understanding Timeshare Exit Fraud](#) (March 2026)
- [Brokerage and Advisory Accounts: Factors to Consider When Choosing an Account Type](#) (February 2026)
- [Feeder Funds and Retail Investors](#) (January 2026)
- [What are Funds of Funds](#) (January 2026)
- [Using Credit Cards for Investing: Exercise Caution](#) (December 2025)
- Investor Alert: [Social Media 'Investment Group' Imposter Scams Continue to Rise](#) (December 2025)
- [Tips for Managing Money After the Loss of a Spouse](#) (December 2025)
- [Be Alert to Investor Risks from SMS Phishing Scams](#) (November 2025)
- Investor Bulletin: [World Investor Week 2025](#) (October 2025)
- [Tips to Avoid Mail Theft-Related Check Fraud](#) (September 2025)
- Investor Bulletin: [Why You Should Consider Adding a Trusted Contact to Your Account](#) (August 2025)
- [Steps Older Adults Can Take to Reduce Fraud Risk](#) (August 2025)
- [Protecting Older Investors from Financial Exploitation](#) (July 2025)
- Investor Bulletin: [Making Sense of Financial Professional Designations](#) (June 2025)
- [Know the Risks of Using Home Equity Loans for Investing](#) (June 2025)
- [Key Terms for Tough Times: The Vocabulary of Stressed Markets](#) (June 2025)
- [Relationship Investment Scams: What They Are and Tips to Avoid Them](#) (May 2025)
- [Recovering from Investment Fraud: Start with These 6 Steps](#) (May 2025)
- [Stock Investing and Due Diligence](#) (April 2025)
- [Bond Investing and Due Diligence](#) (April 2025)
- [Avoiding Pump-and-Dump Scams](#) (April 2025)
- [Five Steps You Can Take to Boost Financial Capability](#) (April 2025)

Investor Tools(available at <https://www.finra.org/investors/tools-and-calculators>)

- **FINRA BrokerCheck:** confirm whether investment professionals and firms are licensed
- **Fixed Income Data Center:** find fixed income security and trade information
- **Market Data Center:** find market information including stock quotes and other data on equities, options and mutual funds
- **Investment Professional Designations:** research what it takes to earn and maintain an investment designation—and what the designation’s acronym stands for
- **Retirement Calculator:** help make sure you have enough to see you through retirement
- **401(k) and IRA Required Minimum Distribution Calculator:** determine your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from a traditional 401(k) or IRA
- **401(k) 'Save the Max' Calculator:** determine if you are maximizing your 401(k) contributions each pay period under allowed IRS limits
- **Risk Meter:** see whether you share traits that make investors vulnerable to fraud
- **Scam Meter:** this tool will help you tell if an investment opportunity might be a scam
- **Con 'Em If You Can:** learn about the types of persuasion tactics used to perpetrate financial fraud, so they are better able to defend against these tactics
- **Smart Investing Courses:** learn about key investing topics, including setting goals, risk and return, fees and expenses and more

FINRA Social Media Accounts Sharing Financial Literacy & Scam Awareness Messaging

- FINRA on [LinkedIn](#)
- FINRA on [Facebook](#)
- FINRA on [Instagram](#)
- FINRA Foundation on [LinkedIn](#)
- FINRA Foundation on [Facebook](#)

Selected Investor Protection Resources for the Securities Industry and Other Professionals

- FINRA [Financial Intelligence Fusion Center](#)
- [Senior Investor Protection Resources for Firms](#)
- [Scam Prevention & Assistance Resources for Firms](#)
- Tools for [Assisting Victims of Financial Fraud](#)
- [Financial Fraud Victim Journey Map](#)
- FINRA Foundation [Resources for Fraud Fighters](#)
- FINRA Events & Training
 - [Elder Financial Fraud: Identifying, Preventing, and Responding as a Financial Professional](#)
 - FINRA [On-Demand Education](#), including Financial Crimes Spotlight Webinars

- FINRA [Crypto and Blockchain Education Program](#)
- Regulatory Element, CE Course: [Disrupting the Cycle of Financial Fraud: Understanding Scam Trends](#)
- Regulatory Element, CE Course: [Reg BI: Preparing a Recommendation for a Particular Retail Customer](#)
- [Senior SAFE Act Training](#) and [Fact Sheet](#) (by FINRA, SEC Staff and NASAA)

FINRA Rules & Guidance Relating to Seniors or Scams

- [Rule 4512](#): Customer Account Information
- [Rule 3241](#): Registered Person Being Named a Customer's Beneficiary or Holding a Position of Trust for a Customer
- [Rule 2165](#): Financial Exploitation of Specified Adults
- [FAQ](#) Regarding FINRA Rules Relating to Financial Exploitation of Seniors
- [Guidance to Firms](#) Related to Senior Investors: FINRA guidance to member firms with respect to senior investors
- [Cybersecurity and Cyber-Enabled Fraud](#): Excerpt from the 2026 FINRA Annual Regulatory Oversight Report (2026)
- [Senior Investors and Trusted Contact Persons](#): Excerpt from the 2026 FINRA Annual Regulatory Oversight Report (2026)
- [Threat Intelligence Product](#): Protecting Vulnerable Adult and Senior Investors (2024)

Selected FINRA Regulatory Notices

- [Regulatory Notice 26-02](#): FINRA Requests Comment on Rule Revisions to Help Member Firms Protect Senior Investors From Financial Exploitation and All Investors From Fraud
- [Regulatory Notice 25-07](#): FINRA Requests Comment on Modernizing FINRA Rules, Guidance, and Processes for the Organization and Operation of Member Workplaces
- [Regulatory Notice 22-31](#): FINRA Shares Practices for Obtaining Customers' Trusted Contacts
- [Regulatory Notice 22-05](#): FINRA Adopts Amendments to FINRA Rule 2165
- [Regulatory Notice 20-38](#): FINRA Adopts Rule to Limit a Registered Person from Being Named a Customer's Beneficiary or Holding a Position of Trust for or on Behalf of a Customer
- [Regulatory Notice 20-34](#): Proposed Amendments to FINRA Rule 2165 and Retrospective Rule Review Report
- [Regulatory Notice 17-11](#): SEC Approves Rules Relating to Financial Exploitation of Seniors
- [Regulatory Notice 07-43](#): Firm Obligations re: Senior Investors

Testimony of
Sam Kunjukunju
On Behalf of the
American Bankers Association
Before the
Special Committee on Aging
Of the
United States Senate
April 15, 2026



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Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Gillibrand, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify for today's hearing entitled "Empowering Seniors Through Financial Literacy: Tools to Protect Savings, Prevent Fraud, and Promote Independence." My name is Sam Kunjukunju, and I am the Vice President of Consumer Education at the American Bankers Association Foundation (ABA Foundation), a 501(c)3 subsidiary of the American Bankers Association (ABA),¹ which develops programs and resources to help banks support the financial well-being of their customers and communities.

The ABA Foundation provides the banking industry with free financial education programs. For more than a century, the Foundation has worked alongside banks of all sizes to help strengthen consumers' financial capability at every stage of life – particularly for older adults navigating retirement, digital changes, and financial caregiving.

Banks play a unique and essential role in supporting the financial health of older Americans. As trusted institutions deeply rooted in their communities, banks are often the first, and most consistent, financial touchpoint for older people and their families. Every day, bank employees help older customers manage retirement income, protect their savings, recognize and avoid scams, and adapt to an increasingly digital financial system. These relationships position banks not only as providers of financial services, but also as front-line educators and protectors of financial security.

Recognizing the growing financial challenges facing older adults, the ABA Foundation develops and delivers educational tools and campaigns that empower banker volunteers to meet people where they are, whether in bank branches, senior centers, community organizations, or online. Through close partnerships with federal agencies, nonprofits, and local leaders, banks help

¹ The American Bankers Association is the voice of the nation's \$25.3 trillion banking industry, which is composed of small, regional, and large banks that together employ over 2 million people, safeguard \$20.1 trillion in deposits and extend \$13.5 trillion in loans.

reinforce financial literacy as a practical safeguard against fraud, financial hardship, and loss of independence in retirement. In the last three years alone, these efforts enabled more than 1,300 banks and 110,000 bank volunteers to reach over 6 million people with financial literacy presentations and resources, reflecting both the scale of industry commitment and the trust communities place in bankers.

We appreciate the Committee's focus on financial literacy as a cornerstone of financial wellbeing, and I welcome the opportunity to share how the banking industry, ABA, and the ABA Foundation are helping older Americans build resilience, protect their assets, and age with financial confidence.

Introduction

America is rapidly aging. Approximately 11,000 Baby Boomers² are turning 65 every day and this trend will continue until 2030, when older adults will comprise 20% of the U.S. population. Just four years later, there will be more people of retirement age than children under 18 for the first time in America's history.³

At the same time, elder financial exploitation is rising. Between 2024 and 2025, the Federal Bureau of Investigation observed a nearly 60% increase in reported financial losses and a 37% increase in complaints among individuals aged 60 and older.^{4,5} When accounting for underreporting, the Federal Trade Commission estimated that annual losses might have been as high as \$81.5 billion among older Americans in 2024 alone.⁶ Financial exploitation not only drains savings; it also undermines older Americans' financial well-being and threatens the retirement security they have spent decades building.

ABA and the ABA Foundation Efforts

Given this reality, ABA and the ABA Foundation have developed a four-pronged strategy to help protect older people through close collaboration with banking partners, focusing on:

- Educating Consumers
- Training Bankers
- Cultivating Partnerships with Law Enforcement and Adult Protective Services
- Leveraging Technology for Good

Educating Consumers

In 2016, the ABA Foundation launched the Safe Banking for Seniors national campaign to equip bankers with the tools they need to educate older adults, and the people who support them, on protecting their financial assets and identities. The program is designed for bankers to deliver workshop presentations in their communities to older adults, their caregivers, family members,

² <https://www.moneytalksnews.com/boomers-retire-every-day-many-without-a-safety-net-how-to-prepare-for-the-peak-crisis/>

³ <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2018/cb18-41-population-projections.html>

⁴ https://www.ic3.gov/AnnualReport/Reports/2025_IC3Report.pdf

⁵ https://www.ic3.gov/AnnualReport/Reports/2024_IC3Report.pdf

⁶ https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/P144400-OlderAdultsReportDec2025.pdf

and other loved ones. We encourage multigenerational learning, recognizing that financial safety is strongest when people of all ages understand risks, share information, and support one another.

The program is organized around three central themes: preventing financial exploitation, strengthening financial caregiving, and managing money. Within these themes, nine modules explore the following topics:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Identifying and avoiding scams | 6. Acting as a responsible financial caregiver |
| 2. Preventing identity theft | 7. Understanding powers of attorney |
| 3. Known perpetrator fraud | 8. Choosing an executor |
| 4. Digital safety matters | 9. Retiring with limited resources |
| 5. Choosing a financial caregiver | |

Safe Banking for Seniors provides bankers with turnkey materials, including facilitator guides, presentation slides, animated videos, and handouts, to support both in-person and virtual community workshops. The fraud-prevention resources highlight common scam red flags such as unexpected or unknown contact, emotional manipulation, urgency to act, insistence on secrecy, and requests for irreversible payments (e.g., gift cards, cryptocurrency, wire transfers, peer-to-peer payment apps, and cash).

To help safeguard finances, the program encourages individuals and families to avoid unsolicited communications, limit what they share online, use unique passphrases for each account, enable multifactor authentication, keep antivirus software up to date, consult trusted friends and family before making financial decisions, and report suspected fraud promptly.

The program also includes a dedicated financial caregiving guide to help families engage with financial and legal professionals as they prepare for potential cognitive changes. For instance, the guide discusses information about identifying trusted contacts to serve as powers of attorney and encourages customers to speak with bankers and elder law attorneys to plan for their future financial wellbeing. To date, more than 2,000 banks have participated in the Safe Banking for Seniors program, helping educate not only older adults, but also the family members and caregivers in their circle.

Additionally, the ABA Foundation also collaborates with federal partners, including the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN), FINRA, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI), the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), and the United States Secret Service (USSS) to produce a series of infographics on scams targeting older adults. These materials highlight issues such as check washing and check theft scams, cryptocurrency investment scams, deepfake media scams, fake check scams, government imposter scams, money mule scams, online dating scams, phishing scams, and tech support scams.

While not aimed exclusively at older people, ABA also launched two campaigns to provide real-world tips for consumers on how to identify common scams and protect themselves:

- The #BanksNeverAskThat campaign, now in its seventh year, uses engaging and humorous videos, quizzes and social media content to highlight common ways scammers try to impersonate banks.
- The #PracticeSafeChecks campaign, now in its third year, offers tips on how people can protect themselves from check fraud, while encouraging consumers to use their bank's digital banking options to send money whenever possible.

Banker Training

Beyond the consumer education campaigns to improve financial education and fraud prevention, both ABA and the ABA Foundation work with bankers to train them to recognize, respond to, and report elder financial exploitation.

ABA offers an online, self-paced course on elder financial exploitation prevention, one of 142 courses that comprise ABA's Frontline Compliance Training program.⁷ The course teaches bankers how to identify elder financial exploitation, understand how older people might be vulnerable to financial exploitation, and the role banks play in recognizing and reporting signs of such abuse. Most banks require staff to take the course at least annually.

Since 2024, the ABA Foundation has also held a free annual in-person Elder Fraud Prevention Summit. This intensive one-day workshop brings together bank leaders, fraud investigators, researchers, and other experts to advance stronger, more coordinated protections for older people. Key topics include:

- Cognitive aging and financial decision-making
- Red flags, intervention strategies, and case-based learning
- Cryptocurrency, AI-driven fraud, and emerging threat vectors
- Trauma informed care and supporting older customers through recovery

The ABA Foundation also hosts several free webinars for the banking industry on a variety of topics relating to safeguarding seniors, including identifying scams, bank partnerships to protect older people, caregiver support, cognitive decline, supporting victims of financial crimes, as well as tackling money mules, among other subjects.

On a state level, the ABA Foundation partners with the 52 state banker associations — representing the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico—to equip their member banks with the tools and training needed to safeguard older adults. Through these collaborations, we coordinate a wide range of virtual and in-person training opportunities designed to help banks recognize, prevent, and respond to elder financial exploitation. These joint efforts strengthen industry-wide awareness, promote consistent best practices, and ensure that financial institutions of all sizes have access to high-quality resources to protect older customers.

Additionally, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, ABA created the Senior Protection Taskforce, a forum open to all member banks to discuss challenges and best practices regarding protecting older customers. Bankers meet virtually five to eight times a year to assess trends and discuss ways to better support older people.

⁷ <https://www.aba.com/training-events/online/frontline-compliance-training>

Cultivating Partnerships with Law Enforcement and Adult Protective Services

Combating elder financial exploitation requires a multifaceted, coordinated strategy—one that brings together financial institutions, law enforcement, and adult protective services to identify, investigate, and stop abuse. In support of this effort, the ABA Foundation works closely with stakeholders such as the National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA). Our engagement includes active participation in NAPSA's Committee Against Financial Exploitation (CAFE), sponsorship of their annual financial exploitation summit, and ongoing efforts to connect banks directly with adult protective services professionals.

To further enhance collaboration, the ABA Foundation also convenes a quarterly law enforcement roundtable that brings together investigators from several federal agencies. These discussions provide a dedicated forum to help banks and investigators share emerging trends, improve communication and investigative coordination, and connect the right people when suspecting elder financial exploitation. By facilitating these connections, we help financial institutions and investigators work more effectively together to detect scams, disrupt fraud networks, and safeguard older customers.

Leveraging Technology for Good

Technology plays a critical role in protecting older adults from fraud and financial exploitation. Through ABA's Partner Network,⁸ banks can explore a wide range of innovative software solutions designed to strengthen their fraud prevention efforts and enhance support for older customers. These tools help institutions detect suspicious activity, streamline reporting, and provide customers with safer, more accessible banking experiences.

ABA's extensive network of industry providers offers banks practical, ready-to-use packages that improve customer protection and modernize service delivery. The Partner Network includes more than 50 vetted vendors offering products and services specifically aimed at combating financial crimes, from advanced fraud monitoring systems to customer education platforms. By connecting banks with these proven solutions, ABA helps banks not only fight fraud more effectively but also empower older adults to bank with confidence.

Extensive Bank Efforts

Banks across the country recognize that protecting older adults from financial exploitation requires a diverse set of strategies, and many institutions are taking proactive steps to address the issue from multiple angles. From large institutions to small community banks, banks offer fraud prevention workshops, online bank training, financial wellness seminars, and coordinate outreach efforts with community organizations. Some examples include:

Large Banks

- Bank of America offers the Security Center as a dedicated web resource with tools and tips consumers can take to help protect their personal and financial information from fraud, learn about red flags, and how to avoid scams. Bank of America also offers the Better Money Habits™ program, which is a free financial education resource dedicated to

⁸ www.aba.com/partnernetwork

helping people manage their money, and includes specific information on financial caregiving, privacy, and security.

- Citi, in partnership with the ABA Foundation, has galvanized a national cadre of bank volunteers to lead Safe Banking for Seniors presentations in communities across the country.
- JPMorgan Chase uses the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Money Smart for Older Adults set of materials to lead educational workshops in retirement communities, branches, and other locations to inform older adults about how they can protect their financial assets.
- Wells Fargo instituted an Elder Client Initiative to help coordinate internal stakeholders and educate older customers as well as their families about preventing scams and financial abuse. Wells Fargo offers a free Hands on Banking program that includes information tailored to help older people manage their money safely.

Regional and Mid-Size Banks

- Capital One Bank developed the "Ready, Set, Bank: Online Banking for Older Adults" program with the National Council on Aging. Designed to help older adults manage their money digitally, the program offers virtual financial well-being workshops to help older people feel empowered to bank online.
- MidFirst Bank's "MoneyMoments" financial education program supports financial literacy among people of all ages. As part of the program, their team of bank educators lead movie-themed fraud prevention workshops and distribute senior fraud crossword puzzles to area senior centers to help prevent victimization.
- Old National Bank created the "Money Safety for Seniors" program to enable anyone in the bank's footprint to freely request and participate in a class on how to detect, protect against, and report financial exploitation of seniors.
- TD Bank developed the TD SAFE (Security Awareness for Everyone) program, offering instruction on fraud prevention through tools, articles, seminars, and virtual lessons to educate people of all ages and backgrounds on how to protect their money.

Community Banks

- Amboy Bank created the "Protecting Our Seniors" program, focused on educating seniors in the community about identity theft and financial exploitation. Through the program, they share content via bank mailings, posters, seminars, and a dedicated Senior Safety webpage housed on the bank's website.
- Bank of the Rockies instituted the Senior Champions program at bank branches. Within each branch, the Champions facilitate outreach events to educate seniors about scams, make concerted efforts to connect with socially isolated seniors, and engage elder justice community stakeholders to help protect older people in the bank's footprint.

- First Community Bank partners with the Senior Housing Crime Prevention Foundation to support the Senior Crimestoppers program and leads educational sessions, such as “Cyber Savvy Seniors” to educate older people in the community.
- Somerset Trust Company hosts financial literacy and fraud seminars throughout the bank’s footprint to help people identify scams against seniors. The bank also participates in an annual Elder Justice Day seminar with their local Area Agency on Aging and the Pennsylvania Link to educate seniors and caregivers about avoiding financial scams and accessing victim services.

National Strategy

While the banking industry is investing significantly in protecting older people, the scale and sophistication of today’s scams require a strategic and coordinated national response. America needs a nationwide public education campaign that brings together federal agencies, nonprofits, and the private sector to deliver a unified, consistent message. The goal would be to expose common scam tactics, such as impersonation, emotional manipulation, urgency, demands for secrecy, and pressure to act quickly and use irreversible payment methods, so the public can recognize these warning signs and resist exploitation more effectively.

This national effort must be grounded in a broader commitment to lifelong financial literacy. A life-cycle approach, one that supports individuals from childhood through retirement, would ensure that people build the knowledge, habits, and resilience needed long before they become older adults. Financial education should be aligned with key life milestones, including entering the workforce, managing credit, starting a family, purchasing a home, and planning for retirement. By preparing people at each stage, we strengthen retirement security and reduce the likelihood that individuals will face financial vulnerability later in life.

At the same time, Congress should consider legislative solutions that empower banks to delay disbursements or hold transactions when they suspect elder financial exploitation. A federal standard, with an appropriate safe harbor, would allow financial institutions to temporarily pause disbursements or hold transactions in instances where the financial institution has a reasonable cause to believe the transaction may be fraudulent. Such a tool would help financial institutions protect older adults and support their financial wellbeing at moments of heightened vulnerability. Establishing a uniform national framework would also eliminate inconsistencies among state laws, enable more decisive action, and ultimately provide stronger, more consistent safeguards for older Americans.

Together, these measures would significantly strengthen the nation’s ability to protect older people.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the banking industry is committed to protecting older customers. Through sustained investments in education, training, cross-sector partnerships, and responsible innovation, we continue to strengthen frontline defenses to combat elder financial exploitation.

But as our population ages and financial crimes grow more sophisticated, these efforts must be accompanied by a policy framework capable of meeting the moment. The recommendations outlined today — a unified national awareness campaign, and clear authority to pause transactions when suspecting financial exploitation — can better prevent fraud, reduce losses, and help older people preserve the financial security they have worked a lifetime to build.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing. I look forward to your questions.



Testimony of Carly Roszkowski
Vice President of Financial Resilience Programming
AARP

on

Empowering Seniors Through Financial Literacy: Tools to Protect Savings, Prevent Fraud, and
Promote Independence

Before the

U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging

April 15, 2026

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My name is Carly Roszkowski, and I am the Vice President of Financial Resilience Programming at AARP. I am honored to be here to testify on behalf of AARP, which advocates on behalf of the 125 million Americans age 50 and older and their families. I would like to thank you, Chairman Scott and Ranking Member Gillibrand, and the members of the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging for holding this important hearing.

Americans age 50 and older are a rapidly growing demographic facing unique financial challenges, including longer life expectancy for some, increased healthcare costs, a vastly different retirement system than the previous generation, which had more access to defined benefit plans, and heightened exposure to financial fraud. Our research consistently shows that financial resilience in later life depends not only on knowledge but also on access to trusted guidance, protections, and age-appropriate tools.¹ Put simply, financial literacy is essential to retirement security. It's the foundation for one's economic security, independence, and dignity in aging.

The retirement system has shifted risk to individuals—but education and support never caught up. The U.S. retirement system now places primary responsibility on individuals to manage saving, investing, and turning those savings into lifelong income. Traditional pensions have largely disappeared; defined contribution plans must be managed over the course of a lifetime, and decisions like Social Security claiming and withdrawal strategies are complex and high-stakes. At the same time, many Americans lack the financial literacy, tools, and ongoing support needed—especially as choices grow more complicated and different life stages require different approaches. This gap leaves millions at risk of outliving their savings or making costly mistakes.

Financial literacy works—but only when it's practical, sustained, timely, and paired with decision support. Research consistently shows that financial knowledge can lead to better outcomes—but knowledge alone is not enough. People need step-by-step, plain-language guidance that helps them act at key moments: when opening a 401(k), nearing retirement, claiming Social Security, or navigating rising costs later in life. Effective programs must simplify complex decisions, address behavioral barriers like fear and procrastination, build confidence, and include fraud awareness. One-time education doesn't work; continuous learning does. AARP's approach reflects this reality—through workshops, tools, calculators, and structured digital programs like *AARP Navigator: Maximizing Retirement Income*, which turns disconnected information into guided, real-world decision-making support.²

Longer lives and economic pressure are reshaping “retirement”—and financial insecurity is a key driver. Americans are living longer, working longer, and experiencing retirement as a transition rather than a cliff. Today, 64 percent of adults worry they won't have enough money to retire, and nearly one in five non-retirees has no retirement savings at all.³ Millions of retirees have returned to work—primarily because they need income, though purpose matters too. Rising

¹ AARP Public Policy Institute, *How Banks and Credit Unions Can Better Serve and Protect People 50-Plus*. Washington, DC: AARP PPI, June 13, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.26419/ppi.00228.001>.

² AARP, *Navigator: Maximizing Retirement Income*, https://navigator.aarp.org/en_gb/courses/course/74/.

³ Brown, S. Kathi. *AARP Financial Security Trends Survey, January 2025*. Washington, DC: AARP Research, May 2025. <https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00525.058>.

costs, longevity uncertainty, and lack of guaranteed income mean this trend will likely continue. Financial security in later life is no longer just about retirement; it's about enabling flexibility, confidence, and dignity across decades. That is why AARP has created robust resources for Americans of any age to better plan for their financial future.

AARP's Financial Literacy Resources

For more than 90 years, Social Security has been a cornerstone of financial security for older Americans, yet it remains a complex program that can be difficult to navigate. But navigating this crucial but complicated program can be challenging. AARP works to provide older Americans with current and unbiased information to ensure they understand their Social Security options, whether they are preparing for retirement, facing a disability, or planning for their family's financial future. We provide calculators, guides and other resources designed to help individuals make informed decisions about when and how to claim Social Security as part of a sturdy retirement plan.⁴ But we know from our surveys many Americans still have questions or misunderstand how to maximize their Social Security.

We also help with financial preparation by providing practical, easy-to-use digital tools that empower individuals to make informed decisions about their financial future and strengthen long-term retirement security. The AARP Retirement Calculator provides individuals with a personalized snapshot of what their financial future might look like.⁵ The tool allows users to simply answer a few questions about their household status, salary and retirement savings — for example, what they have in an individual retirement account (IRA) or 401(k). All of this results in guidance to help individuals plan to retire when and how they want.

The Required Minimum Distribution Calculator addresses a different, but equally important, stage of retirement.⁶ Once individuals reach the age where withdrawals from retirement accounts are mandated, this tool helps them estimate the amount they must withdraw each year to remain compliant with federal regulations. By simplifying complex rules into clear, understandable outputs, the calculator reduces confusion, helps retirees avoid costly penalties, and supports better income planning during retirement.

We also provide the *AARP Navigator: Maximizing Retirement Income*, which is a guided, digital learning experience that helps individuals understand income sources in retirement, manage expenses and withdrawal strategies, and make informed decisions about Social Security and savings.⁷ The program provides structured, step-by-step education rather than overwhelming users with disconnected information. It emphasizes turning savings into sustainable income, avoiding common retirement pitfalls, and building confidence in financial decision-making. This program meets people where they are — whether they are just starting to plan for retirement, or if they are near retirement. Users of the program tell us that it helps them better understand the decisions they have to make beyond surface-level knowledge, and when they need to make

⁴ AARP, *Understanding Social Security Retirement*, <https://www.aarp.org/social-security/>.

⁵ AARP, *Retirement Calculator*, <https://www.aarp.org/money/retirement/retirement-calculator/>.

⁶ AARP, *Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) Calculator*, <https://www.aarp.org/money/retirement/required-minimum-distribution-calculator/>.

⁷ AARP, *Navigator*, <https://navigator.aarp.org/courses/course/74/>.

them—providing them with confidence to ask meaningful questions when they meet with tax and retirement professionals.

And these are just some of the many tools we provide on our one stop- hub designed to help Americans make informed decisions across key aspects of their lives. All of these tools work to support financial planning, health and wellness, caregiving, and retirement preparedness, helping individuals better understand their options and plan with confidence. By translating complex topics into practical, accessible resources, AARP equips consumers with actionable information they can use to strengthen their financial security, protect their health, and plan for the future.⁸

AARP Fraud Prevention Work

A key component of a secure financial future is protecting your hard-earned savings from criminals. That is why working to prevent fraud and scams from happening is a top priority for AARP.

The AARP Fraud Watch Network is deeply vested in helping our nation’s older adults understand the very real threat to their financial security that fraud represents.⁹ We engage in communities around the country through our state offices and their trained volunteer fraud fighters to spread the message of fraud prevention. We share robust information online; we cover the issue in *AARP the Magazine* and the *AARP Bulletin* – which reach tens of millions of readers with each edition; we offer a biweekly email or text ‘watchdog alert’ newsletter and we produce an award-winning podcast, AARP’s *The Perfect Scam* – in the true crime genre but focused on the impact of this type of crime on victims and their families. We also offer a variety of virtual educational events, from member tele-town halls to webinars and Facebook live events.

In addition, AARP is unique in its focus on supporting victims of fraud and their families. Our Fraud Watch Network Helpline receives around 500 calls a day. These calls can be from people who simply want to report a scam they’ve encountered but didn’t engage with, to people who aren’t sure whether that Publishers Clearing House letter claiming they’ve won \$1 million and a Mercedes is legitimate (it’s not), and too often, from victims and their family members in the aftermath of the crime. We also offer an online victim support group program, through which trained facilitators run small group sessions to begin to address the emotional impact of fraud victimization—helping older Americans rebuild their lives.

On the prevention front, we know that education is critical, but we cannot educate our way out of the fraud crisis. AARP is at the forefront of seeking systemic change. For one, AARP has been leading an effort to reframe the narrative on fraud victimization. Our society tends to treat fraud victims differently than other crime victims. We often blame them with the language we use: they’ve been “tricked,” or “duped,” or “fooled,” rather than stating that a criminal has stolen from them. We tend to believe that there’s nothing law enforcement can do because the criminals are abroad. Our narrative change movement is rooted in research that shows how our tendency to blame fraud victims has served to deprioritize fraud as a crime.¹⁰ From the start of our narrative

⁸ AARP, *Tools & Calculators for Your Life*, <https://www.aarp.org/tools/>.

⁹ AARP, *AARP Fraud Watch Network*, <https://www.aarp.org/money/scams-fraud/about-fraud-watch-network/>.

¹⁰ AARP, *Words Matter*, <https://www.aarp.org/lp/words-matter/>.

change campaign with the FINRA Investor Education Foundation in 2021, we have continued the focus and we are seeing real movement – among consumers, in the media, across industries and among policymakers, toward an understanding that fraud is a crime and is not the victim’s fault.

AARP also runs a program called BankSafe, which trains employees at financial institutions to detect fraud and financial exploitation. BankSafe works with the financial services industry to help them stop financial exploitation before the money leaves accounts.¹¹ The program encourages industry to voluntarily adopt research-based interventions, policies, and procedures that effectively prevent exploitation. Researchers from the Virginia Tech Center for Gerontology have studied the impact of training bank and credit union staff to spot and prevent financial exploitation.¹² The research shows significant benefits to consumers and financial institutions when frontline employees take the AARP BankSafe training rather than other forms of training, including a 133 percent increase in knowledge regarding exploitation and four times greater employee confidence in recognizing, preventing, and reporting cases of financial exploitation. Compared with employees who did not undergo the training, BankSafe trained employees saved consumers 16 times more money from exploitation.

In addition to our fraud prevention awareness and victim support services, AARP conducts research on fraud to inform our work and the public at large. For example, in May 2024, we conducted research on “How Adult Consumers Feel, What They Know, and Their Actions That Pose Risks.”¹³ The report found that while most adults rarely or never answer phone calls, texts, or friend requests from people they don’t know, a significant percentage of adults (35 percent) usually or always do one or more of these actions. The report also looked at how adults were maintaining security of their devices and online accounts, including the use of VPNs and two-factor authentication, downloading free apps and/or taking online quizzes on social media, and the use of different passwords on all accounts.

Despite all our work, challenges still persist.

Financial Challenges Facing Older Americans

Many older Americans approach retirement with insufficient savings and limited retirement planning.¹⁴ Sixty-four percent of adults are worried they will not have enough money to support themselves in retirement, while 19 percent — who have not yet retired — have no retirement savings at all.¹⁵ A significant share of households nearing retirement have not calculated how

¹¹ AARP, *BankSafe*, <https://www.aarp.org/pri/initiatives/banksafe/>.

¹² AARP, *The Impact of Training Financial Professionals to Prevent Financial Exploitation*, July 2022, https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/banksafe/2022/july/AARP_BankSafe_FullReport_6-13-22.pdf.

¹³ AARP, *The Fraud Crisis In America: How Adult Consumers Feel, What They Know, And Their Actions That Pose Risks*, May 2024, <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/topics/work-finances-retirement/fraud-consumer-protection/fraud-awareness-americans.doi.10.26419-2fres.00788.001.pdf>.

¹⁴ AARP, “New AARP Survey: 1 in 5 Americans Ages 50+ Have No Retirement Savings and Over Half Worry They Will Not Have Enough to Last in Retirement” (Apr. 24, 2024), <https://www.aarp.org/press/releases/2024-4-24-new-aarp-survey-1-in-5-americans-ages-50-have-no-retirement-savings.html>.

¹⁵ Brown, S. Kathi. *AARP Financial Security Trends Survey*, January 2025. Washington, DC: AARP Research, May 2025. <https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00525.058>.

much they need to save, and many rely primarily on Social Security for income in retirement. Longer life expectancy further increases the risk that individuals will outlive their savings. Despite these realities, financial education efforts often remain heavily focused on asset accumulation, with far less attention to retirement income planning, decumulation strategies, and longevity risk.

At the same time, financial fraud and exploitation are widespread and growing problems. Older adults are disproportionately targeted, and financial literacy research shows a concerning dynamic: objective financial literacy can decline after age 60 for some, while confidence often remains high.¹⁶ This gap between confidence and capability can be exploited by criminals. While education about fraud is important, evidence suggests that education alone is insufficient without also introducing protective interventions, trusted contacts, and coordinated responses involving financial institutions and government agencies. These challenges underscore the need for a strategy that goes beyond knowledge transfer and addresses how financial decisions are made in real-world contexts.

Adopt a Life Stage Relevant Framework

A life-stage-based approach to financial literacy that explicitly recognizes how financial needs, risks, and decision-making change over time, particularly in later life, is key. Financial education efforts too often assume a linear career trajectory culminating in a well-planned retirement. In reality, many individuals are pushed out of the workforce earlier than expected due to health challenges,¹⁷ caregiving responsibilities,¹⁸ economic disruption, or age discrimination.¹⁹ Others continue working longer than planned, often in contingent or part-time roles with fewer benefits and protections.^{20,21}

We've heard from many older adults that it's difficult to keep up with the rising cost of living while on a fixed income. This financial squeeze can be especially acute for family caregivers who have had to leave the workforce, even for a short time. A Virginia woman in her late 50s told us that "she'll likely work until she can't anymore" to be able to continue helping her disabled adult son. Countless others said they have returned to work after retiring because they

¹⁶ Boyle, Patricia, Olivia S. Mitchell, Gary R. Mottola, and Lei Yu. "Declining Financial and Health Literacy among Older Men and Women." *Journal of the Economics of Ageing* (2025): 100547. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeoag.2025.100547>.

¹⁷ Employee Benefit Research Institute and Greenwald Research. *2025 EBRI/Greenwald Retirement Confidence Survey Summary Report*. Washington, DC: Employee Benefit Research Institute, April 24, 2025. <https://www.ebri.org/retirement/retirement-confidence-survey>.

¹⁸ Coile, Courtney C. "Health Shocks and Couples' Labor Supply Decisions." *NBER Working Paper* no. 10810. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, October 2004. <https://doi.org/10.3386/w10810>.

¹⁹ U.S. Government Accountability Office. *Older Workers: Age Discrimination Is a Persistent and Growing Problem*. GAO-20-742. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Accountability Office, June 2020. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-20-742>.

²⁰ Antonelli, Angela M. *The Aging of America: A Changing Picture of Work and Retirement*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center for Retirement Initiatives, 2018. <https://cri.georgetown.edu/the-aging-of-america-a-changing-picture-of-work-and-retirement/>.

²¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Contingent and Alternative Employment Arrangements* — July 2023. USDL-24-2267. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, November 8, 2024. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/conemp.htm>.

didn't feel they had enough money saved. A retired accountant in New Hampshire, for example, went back to work as a receptionist and is still feeling the pinch. "Things have gotten more expensive, and I'm doing more and more shopping at the dollar store," she said.

AARP research shows that in the past six months, 7 percent of retirees age 50 and older have "unretired," or reentered the labor force.²² This is approximately 8.5 million Americans. Among retirees, 28 percent said they retired too early. Our latest research also shows that 48 percent said their primary reason for returning to work is to make money. The second most common reason (14 percent) is to stay active. With the cost of living still high and many people worried that they don't have enough saved for retirement, the trend of older adults working longer will likely continue requiring evolving strategies for financial literacy.

As a result, financial education must begin well before retirement and continue through key transition points, including job loss or job change later in life, the transition from work to retirement, the onset of caregiving responsibilities, and decisions related to housing, health care, Social Security claiming, and end-of-life planning. These transition points frequently involve complex, high-stakes financial decisions that cannot be effectively addressed through one-time or generic education earlier in life.

We should therefore promote continuous, adaptive, and responsive financial education. This includes recognizing that older adults may face declining cognitive capacity,²³ changing health needs,²⁴ and increasing exposure to fraud and financial exploitation.²⁵ A life-stage framework would help ensure that education is delivered in ways that are timely, relevant, and aligned with the decisions individuals are facing.

In addition, we must address the growing role of family members, caregivers, and trusted third parties who increasingly manage or assist with financial decision-making for aging parents or loved ones.²⁶ Financial literacy efforts should include resources that help individuals plan for shared or delegated financial management, including clear guidance on powers of attorney, fiduciary duties, beneficiary designations, and safeguards against misuse or exploitation. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's (CFPB) *Managing Someone Else's Money* guide is an example of a well-regarded, free resource designed for financial caregivers that details responsibilities of a fiduciary, how to identify fraud and where to go for help, if needed, in clear and understandable language. Supporting both older adults and those who assist them is essential to maintaining financial security, autonomy, and dignity later in life.

²² AARP, *Retirement on Pause: High Costs Push Older Americans Back to Work*, February 2026,

<https://www.aarp.org/press/releases/2026-02-05-high-costs-older-americans-back-to-work.html>.

²³ National Institute on Aging. *How the Aging Brain Affects Thinking*. Bethesda, MD: National Institutes of Health, updated 2024. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/brain-health/how-aging-brain-affects-thinking>.

²⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Cognitive Health and Caregiving*. Atlanta, GA: CDC, June 3, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/cdi/indicator-definitions/cognitive-health-caregiving.html>.

²⁵ Federal Trade Commission. *Protecting Older Consumers 2024–2025: A Report of the Federal Trade Commission*. Washington, DC: Federal Trade Commission, December 1, 2025. <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/12/ftc-issues-annual-report-congress-agencys-actions-protect-older-adults>.

²⁶ AARP Public Policy Institute and National Alliance for Caregiving. *Caregiving in the United States*. Washington, DC: AARP, 2020. <https://www.aarp.org/ppi/info-2015/caregiving-in-the-united-states.html>.

Elevate Retirement Income and Decumulation Literacy

AARP believes we should treat retirement income and decumulation literacy as a core pillar of financial education, rather than a secondary or optional topic. For most households, the transition from saving to spending in retirement is the most complex and consequential financial phase of life. Yet financial education efforts have historically emphasized accumulation – how to save and invest – while devoting far less attention to how assets are converted into sustainable income once paychecks end. Research consistently shows that many retirees struggle with this transition and often decumulate assets more slowly or less effectively than standard economic models would predict, with significant implications for lifetime financial security.²⁷ Retirement income literacy should encompass education on managing withdrawals across different account types, optimizing Social Security claiming decisions, sequencing assets over time, and understanding longevity risk.

Social Security alone represents the largest source of guaranteed income for most older Americans, and claiming decisions can permanently affect monthly benefits and lifetime income – not just for the worker, but also for their spouse. Monthly benefits are 77 percent higher if claimed at age 70 than they are if claimed at age 62. For many people already in their 60s, delaying Social Security claiming may be one of the most significant options still available to them to improve their economic stability in retirement.

Yet despite these high stakes, most beneficiaries claim benefits before their full retirement age, often without fully understanding the tradeoffs involved.²⁸ AARP research finds significant gaps in people’s understanding of Social Security claiming ages and other aspects of the program.²⁹ Only 40 percent of Americans could correctly identify the earliest age you can start collecting retirement benefits (62) and just 24 percent knew the age that would maximize their monthly retirement benefit (70). People also lacked knowledge about spousal benefits and how work affects benefits. As a result, comprehensive education that clearly explains how claiming age, continued work, and household circumstances affect Social Security benefits could materially improve retirement outcomes, particularly for individuals who rely heavily on Social Security as their primary income source. In addition, the language and the framing of this education can affect how people perceive their options.³⁰ A bill currently before the Senate (S. 1504, the Claiming Age Clarity Act) would improve the terminology of Social Security’s retirement

²⁷ Hessam Bavafa, Anita Mukherjee, and Tyler Q. Welch, *Asset Decumulation in Retirement: Patterns, Predictors, and the Role of Financial Literacy*, TIAA Institute Research Dialogue no. 232 (New York: TIAA Institute, 2025), <https://www.tiaa.org/content/dam/tiaa/institute/pdf/research-dialogue/2025-11/tiaa-institute-research-asset-decumulation-in-retirement-patterns-predictors-and-the-role-of-financial-literacy-rd-232-bavafa.pdf>.

²⁸ Suzanne Shu and John W. Payne, *Social Security Claiming Intentions: Psychological Ownership, Loss Aversion, and Information Displays*, NBER Working Paper no. 31499 (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2023), <https://www.nber.org/papers/w31499>.

²⁹ Bryan Miller, “Celebrating 90 Years of Social Security: A Look at Changing and Persisting Opinions Over Time: Social Security Opinions and Attitudes on Its 90th Anniversary” (AARP Research, 2025), <https://www.aarp.org/pri/topics/work-finances-retirement/social-security/social-security-90th-anniversary-survey/>.

³⁰ Perez-Arce, Francisco, Lila Rabinovich, Joanne Yoong, and Laith Alattar. “Three Little Words? The Impact of Social Security Terminology on Knowledge and Claiming Intentions.” *Journal of Pension Economics and Finance* 23, no. 1 (2024): 132–51. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474747222000269>.

benefit claiming ages in order to help individuals make more informed choices about when to start collecting benefits.³¹

Moreover, an effective financial literacy strategy must recognize that people of all ages have a stake in Social Security and should have a baseline understanding of how the program works. Research indicates that people consistently overestimate the scope of the program's financing shortfall. Nearly two-thirds of Americans did not understand what would happen if the Social Security trust funds became depleted; over a third believed no benefits would be paid at all, and roughly another one-third said they did not know. In reality, Social Security's actuaries project that roughly 75 to 80 percent of benefits would remain payable after trust fund depletion for the foreseeable future. This lack of program knowledge can and does affect people's benefit claiming decisions: AARP research in 2025 found that "almost half of older Americans (49 percent) who recently started receiving — or plan to start receiving — Social Security retirement payments earlier than originally planned were motivated by concerns that Social Security is running out of money."³² Improving people's basic understanding of how the program works — and that solvency should not be a reason to claim early — would help facilitate more informed claiming decisions.

Similarly, effective decumulation requires understanding how to draw income from a mix of tax-advantaged retirement accounts, taxable savings, and guaranteed income sources while managing exposure to market volatility, inflation, and unexpected expenses. Unlike the accumulation phase — where defaults and simplified investment options can guide behavior — the decumulation phase places far greater decision-making demands on individuals. The absence of standardized guidance or clear educational frameworks leaves many retirees vulnerable to poor timing, inefficient withdrawal patterns, or overly conservative behavior that unnecessarily suppresses their standard of living.³³

The need to elevate decumulation literacy has grown more urgent as the U.S. retirement system has shifted from defined benefit pensions toward defined contribution plans. This shift has transferred responsibility not only for saving but also for income planning and risk management from institutions to individuals. While defined benefit plans typically provide lifetime income by default, defined contribution plans generally do not, requiring participants to make complex decisions about how long their savings must last and how much they can safely spend each year. Research and policy analyses consistently identify this institutional shift as a central driver of retirement income insecurity and underscore the importance of education that prepares individuals for managing longevity and income risk on their own.³⁴

³¹ Deirdre Shesgreen, AARP, "Can a Few New Labels Change Social Security Claiming Trends?," <https://www.aarp.org/social-security/retirement-age-clarity-act/>; AARP letter to Senators Bill Cassidy, Chris Coons, Susan Collins, and Tim Kaine, September 2025, <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/politics/advocacy/2025/09/endorsement-letter-claiming-age-clarity-act-senate.pdf>.

³² Miller, *op. cit.*

³³ Bavafa et al., *op. cit.*, 15.

³⁴ Samuel Estreicher and Laurence Gold, "The Shift from Defined Benefit Plans to Defined Contribution Plans," *Lewis & Clark Law Review* 11, no. 2 (2007), <https://law.lclark.edu/live/files/9567-lcb112estreicherpdf>.

Finally, retirement income literacy should explicitly address longevity risk – the risk of outliving one’s savings – which is difficult for individuals to intuitively assess. Increases in life expectancy, combined with wide variation in individual outcomes, mean that many retirees must plan for decades of income without knowing how long their resources will need to last. Educational efforts that help individuals understand life expectancy uncertainty and the role of guaranteed income sources can support more realistic planning and reduce the risk of financial hardship at advanced ages.³⁵

Prioritize Outcome-Based Evaluation and Evidence

A growing body of research demonstrates that increases in financial knowledge, awareness, or self-reported confidence do not consistently translate into improved financial outcomes. While traditional financial education metrics often focus on inputs (such as program reach or content delivered) or intermediate indicators (such as knowledge gains), these measures alone provide limited insight into whether programs meaningfully improve financial security. Comprehensive reviews of financial literacy research find that the behavioral and financial impacts of education initiatives vary widely, underscoring the need for evaluation frameworks that focus on real-world outcomes rather than solely on educational attainment.³⁶

It is important to prioritize outcome-based evaluation of financial literacy efforts that tracks measurable changes in behavior and risk exposure. Examples of such outcomes include increased participation in retirement plans, sustained contribution behavior, improved Social Security claiming decisions, greater use of trusted contacts and account safeguards, reduced reliance on high-cost or inappropriate credit products, and lower rates of fraud victimization. These indicators more directly reflect whether individuals are better positioned to navigate financial risks and maintain long-term security, particularly in later life.³⁷

Federal oversight bodies have similarly emphasized the importance of outcome-focused measurement. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has found that many federal financial literacy programs report limited or inconsistent outcome data, making it difficult to assess effectiveness or compare interventions across agencies. GAO has specifically recommended that the Treasury Department and the CFPB, in their roles leading the Financial Literacy & Education Commission, encourage agencies to collect and report standardized outcome data to strengthen accountability and improve program design.³⁸ Without such data, policymakers lack the evidence necessary to determine which approaches merit expansion and which should be refined or discontinued.

³⁵ Karolos Arapakis and Gal Wettstein, *Longevity Risk: An Essay* (Chestnut Hill, MA: Center for Retirement Research at Boston College, 2023), https://crr.bc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2023_Longevity-Risk.pdf.

³⁶ Tim Kaiser and Annamaria Lusardi, *Financial Literacy and Financial Education: An Overview*, NBER Working Paper no. 32355 (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2024), https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w32355/w32355.pdf.

³⁷ AARP Public Policy Institute, *op. cit.*, 1; Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, *Financial Institutions Can Help Prevent Elder Financial Exploitation with Alerts to Trusted Contacts* (Washington, DC: CFPB, 2021), https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_trusted-contacts-fis_2021-11.pdf.

³⁸ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Financial Literacy: Better Outcome Reporting Could Facilitate Oversight of Programs for Older Adults and People with Disabilities*, GAO-24-106381 (Washington, DC: GAO, April 2024), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-24-106381.pdf>.

Promote “Just-in-Time” and Workplace-Based Education

Evidence suggests that financial education is most effective when delivered at or near key decision points, such as job changes, enrollment in workplace benefits, retirement transitions, or the onset of caregiving responsibilities, rather than as one-time, abstract, or disconnected instruction. Research reviewing decades of financial education interventions finds that timing and relevance are critical to whether individuals apply information to real-world choices, particularly when decisions are complex or unfamiliar.³⁹ Education that coincides with moments when individuals must act is more likely to influence behavior than education provided well in advance of, or long after, the decision itself.⁴⁰

The workplace is a particularly effective setting for decision-point education because many consequential financial choices, such as retirement plan enrollment, contribution levels, and benefit elections, are made there. Some people are living longer, which dramatically increases the risk of outliving savings, especially without lifetime income. Some people are also working longer to fund these longer lives. We know that many older workers are staying in the workforce longer. About 38 million people age 55 and older are working today—more than two and a half times the number 40 years ago.⁴¹ And work is changing. A substantial body of evidence shows that standardized and unbiased workplace-based and employer-facilitated education increases retirement plan participation and contribution rates. Behavioral economics research demonstrates that simplifying choices and pairing information with enrollment opportunities significantly improve outcomes.⁴² This underscores the value of integrating education directly into benefits decision-making processes rather than treating it as a standalone activity.

Integrate Fraud Prevention with Cognitive Aging and Protective Design

Fraud prevention should be recognized as a core component of financial literacy for individuals of all ages, particularly for older adults who face heightened, evolving risks. Research shows that age-related changes in cognition, such as declines in executive function, information processing speed, and susceptibility to social manipulation, can increase vulnerability to fraud, even among individuals with otherwise strong financial skills.⁴³ Fraud prevention cannot rely solely on

³⁹ Kaiser et al., *op. cit.*, 23.

⁴⁰ Bruce Ian Carlin and David T. Robinson, “Financial Education and Timely Decision Support: Lessons from Junior Achievement,” *American Economic Review: Papers & Proceedings* 102, no. 3 (2012): 305–308, <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.102.3.305>.

⁴¹ AARP, *New AARP Survey Shows a Sharp Increase in the Number of Older Americans Seeking a Job Change*, January 16, 2025, <https://www.aarp.org/press/releases/2025-1-16-new-aarp-survey-sharp-increase-number-older-americans-seeking-job-change.html>.

⁴² Brigitte C. Madrian and Dennis F. Shea, “The Power of Suggestion: Inertia in 401(k) Participation and Savings Behavior,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 116, no. 4 (2001): 1149–1187, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2696456>.

⁴³ DeLiema, Marguerite, David Burnes, and Lynn Langton.

“The Financial and Psychological Impact of Identity Theft among Older Adults.” *Innovation in Aging* 5, no. 4 (2021): igab043. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geroni/igab043>.

knowledge-based education, but must incorporate insights from cognitive aging research to better reflect how decisions are actually made under stress, urgency, or deception.⁴⁴

When developing financial literacy programs, we should explicitly promote protective design features that reduce reliance on individual vigilance alone. Evidence from regulators and law enforcement demonstrates that tools such as trusted contact protocols, transaction monitoring, alerts, and appropriate payment delays enable earlier detection of suspicious activity and reduce financial harm. Federal financial regulators have jointly recognized these mechanisms as effective risk-management practices, particularly when paired with employee training and clear escalation pathways.⁴⁵ Embedding awareness of these safeguards into financial literacy efforts helps normalize their use and empowers consumers to adopt protections before harm occurs.

It is important to expand public awareness and prevention efforts modeled on proven initiatives, including AARP's Fraud Watch Network, which combines education, real-time alerts, and victim support.⁴⁶ Financial capability initiatives should increase the ability of all people to make informed decisions about the use and management of money and include information on financial fraud and abuse. They should also cover technological advances that may be of value to older consumers. Research tools that accurately measure the effectiveness of financial capability programs should be developed. Public-private coordination with consumer groups and financial service providers is critical to enabling early intervention, timely reporting, and access to recovery resources when fraud occurs. Evidence from enforcement agencies and victim services providers shows that early action can significantly limit losses and mitigate the cascading financial, emotional, and health consequences of victimization.⁴⁷

Finally, fraud prevention should be treated not only as a consumer protection issue, but also as a public health concern. Fraud victimization is associated with increased stress, anxiety, loss of independence, and adverse health outcomes, particularly among older adults. Addressing fraud through a public-health lens – focused on prevention, harm reduction, and coordinated response – is key to addressing with the real-world impacts of financial exploitation and support a more comprehensive approach to financial security across the lifespan.⁴⁸

Address Structural Barriers Alongside Education

Financial literacy outcomes are strongly shaped by income, education, race, health, and access to safe, affordable financial products, with persistent disparities across demographic groups. National surveys consistently show that individuals with lower incomes, less formal education,

⁴⁴ Rachel E. Morgan and Susannah N. Tapp, *Examining Financial Fraud Against Older Adults* (Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, March 20, 2024), <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/examining-financial-fraud-against-older-adults>.

⁴⁵ Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System et al., *Interagency Statement on Elder Financial Exploitation* (Washington, DC: Federal Reserve Board, December 4, 2024), <https://www.federalreserve.gov/frrs/guidance/interagency-statement-on-elder-financial-exploitation.htm>.

⁴⁶ AARP, *AARP Fraud Watch Network*, <https://www.aarp.org/money/scams-fraud/about-fraud-watch-network/>.

⁴⁷ Federal Trade Commission, *op. cit.* 10.

⁴⁸ U.S. Department of Justice, *Annual Report to Congress on Efforts to Combat Elder Fraud and Abuse* (Washington, DC: DOJ, November 17, 2025), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/departments-justice-releases-2025-annual-report-congress-efforts-combat-elder-fraud-and-abuse>.

and limited access to mainstream financial services score lower on standard measures of financial literacy and experience worse financial outcomes, including lower retirement preparedness and higher financial fragility. These gaps are particularly pronounced among Black and Hispanic or Latino households, reflecting broader structural inequalities rather than differences in motivation or effort alone.⁴⁹

That is one reason AARP Foundation, an affiliate of AARP, has prioritized a focus on advancing financial resilience for older adults as part of their work.⁵⁰ By strengthening access to income and stability for people age 50+ who are at heightened risk of economic insecurity. The Foundation's approach to workforce participation prioritizes helping experienced workers reconnect to employment and navigate barriers in the modern labor market.

This accomplished largely through the BACK TO WORK 50+ program which provides free nationwide job search coaching and resources- along with referrals for other training and financial assistance- to thousands of unemployed and underemployed workers 50 and over.⁵¹ The program helps low-income older adults build the skills and confidence to regain employment and compete for higher quality jobs that serve as a pathway to financial resilience.

We must acknowledge the limits of education as a standalone intervention and coordinate financial literacy initiatives with policies that expand access to retirement plans, trusted financial advice, and core consumer protections. Evidence shows that individuals are far more likely to save and make sound financial decisions when they have access to payroll-deducted retirement plans, safe default options, and regulated financial products – conditions that education alone cannot create.^{52,53} Without addressing these structural barriers, financial education efforts risk overstating their impact and leaving populations with the least access to financial infrastructure further behind, despite increased knowledge or awareness.^{54,55}

Ensure Accessibility and Inclusive Design

Financial education materials should be accessible across formats, including print, in-person, and digital delivery, and written in plain, clear language. AARP research consistently shows that communication and comprehension needs vary widely among older adults, and that overly complex language, jargon, or digital-only formats can unintentionally exclude large segments of

⁴⁹ Annamaria Lusardi et al., *Financial Literacy and Retirement Fluency in America: Findings from the 2025 TIAA Institute–GFLEC Personal Finance Index* (New York: TIAA Institute, 2025); FINRA Investor Education Foundation, *National Financial Capability Study* (Washington, DC: FINRA, 2021).

⁵⁰ AARP Foundation, <https://www.aarp.org/aarp-foundation/>.

⁵¹ AARP Foundation, <https://www.aarp.org/aarp-foundation/our-work/income/back-to-work-50-plus.html>.

⁵² The Pew Charitable Trusts, *Workers Without Access to Retirement Benefits Struggle to Build Wealth* (Washington, DC: Pew, June 25, 2025), <https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2025/06/workers-without-access-to-retirement-benefits-struggle-to-build-wealth>.

⁵³ AARP Public Policy Institute, *Payroll-Deduction Savings Programs Improve Retirement Security*. Washington, DC, December 12, 2024. <https://www.aarp.org/ppi/topics/work-finances-retirement/financial-security-retirement/payroll-deduction-savings-programs-improve-retirement-security-s/>.

⁵⁴ Kaiser et al., *op. cit.*, 18.

⁵⁵ AARP Public Policy Institute, *op. cit.*, 1.

the population.⁵⁶ Accessible communication is particularly important given the prevalence of vision loss, hearing loss, and age-related cognitive changes, which can affect how individuals receive and process information even when their underlying financial decision-making capacity remains intact.⁵⁷ Ensuring that financial education resources are readable, understandable, and navigable across a range of abilities will help prevent unintentional exclusion and support fairer access to financial information.

Conclusion

In closing, the realities of longer lives for some, rising costs, and a retirement system that places increasing responsibility on individuals demand a renewed focus on financial literacy that is practical, ongoing, and actionable. Financial literacy and fraud prevention work together. Building awareness, education, and the importance of these strategies into financial literacy is critical. Too many Americans are navigating complex retirement decisions without the tools, guidance, or confidence they need—contributing to financial insecurity, delayed retirement, and workforce reentry driven by economic necessity. By investing in trusted education, decision-support tools, and policies that reflect how people work and retire today, we can help ensure that every American has the knowledge and confidence to achieve financial security, independence, and dignity as they age.

We thank this Committee for bringing attention to this important issue and look forward to working with you to address the financial challenges that Americans aged 50 and older face, combat fraud and find comprehensive solutions to prevent it.

⁵⁶ AARP and Older Adults Technology Services, *Age-Friendly Technology Design: A Practical Guide for Designers and Developers of Digital Experiences* (Washington, DC: AARP, 2021),

<https://creativeagingresource.lifetimearts.org/wp-content/uploads/AARP-Age-Inclusive-Techn-Broch.pdf>.

⁵⁷ AARP Research, *The Language of Aging* (Washington, DC: AARP, updated September 17, 2025),

<https://www.aarp.org/pri/topics/aging-experience/language-aging/>.



Written Testimony of Scott Kahan, CFP®

Hearing on

“Empowering Seniors Through Financial Literacy: Tools to Protect Savings, Prevent Fraud, and Promote Independence”

Before the

United States Senate Special Committee on Aging

April 15, 2026

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Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Gillibrand, and distinguished Members of the Committee:

Good afternoon. My name is Scott Kahan, CFP®. I am a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER® professional and the Principal and Senior Financial Planner at Financial Asset Management Corporation in New York. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about this important topic of empowering seniors through financial literacy, especially during April, which is Financial Literacy Month.

As a CFP® professional, helping clients achieve their financial goals has been my driving passion throughout a career spanning more than 40 years. Over that time, I have witnessed shifts in investment management, technology, financial planning strategies, and consumer preferences, but one thing has always held true: financial planning – taking a comprehensive and long-term approach – is what provides the best roadmap to financial wellness. I launched Financial Asset Management Corporation in 1986 with the vision to provide individuals, families, and small businesses with tools and resources to make and implement informed financial decisions. From my earliest days as a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER® professional, I have been committed to providing the best financial planning services to my clients, regardless of their net worth. In 2026, that vision remains the same and is the cornerstone to the success of the firm and our clients.

Being a CFP® professional is at the heart of everything I do. For more than 50 years, CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER® certification has been the standard of excellence for financial planners. CFP® professionals like me are required to meet extensive training and experience requirements and make a commitment to CFP Board,¹ as part of their certification, to comply with high standards of competency and ethics, including a fiduciary obligation to act in the clients' best interests at all times when providing financial advice. The CFP® professionals who share this commitment operate within various business models, working for investment advisers, broker-dealers, and insurance companies across all 50 states and United States territories and serving millions of

¹ [CFP Board](#) is the professional body for personal financial planners in the United States. CFP Board consists of two affiliated organizations focused on advancing the financial planning profession for the public's benefit. CFP Board of Standards sets and upholds standards for financial planning and administers the prestigious CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER® certification — widely recognized by the public, advisors and firms as the standard for financial planners — so that the public has access to the benefits of competent and ethical financial planning. CFP Board Center for Financial Planning addresses diversity and workforce development challenges and conducts and publishes research that adds to the financial planning profession's body of knowledge.

American families. Today, there are more than 107,000 CFP® professionals certified by CFP Board, representing more than one-third of all retail financial professionals in the United States.²

I have always been a passionate advocate for the financial planning profession. Early on in my career, I made a commitment to educating future financial planners. When I was 29 years old, I started the educational program for CFP® certification at New York University (NYU). I taught at NYU as an Adjunct Associate Professor of Financial Management for many years and was recognized for my contributions with the Award for Teaching Excellence. I have also taught aspiring financial professionals at Baruch College in Manhattan and Marymount College in Westchester County, New York, and today often serve as a mentor to new CFP® professionals and new CFP® candidates as they begin their careers.

I have also worked to build the professional community of financial planners, including in leadership roles with the membership organization for CFP® professionals – the Financial Planning Association (FPA). I served on FPA's National Board of Directors for five years and chaired its Metro New York chapter. After my time on the Board concluded, I continued to stay engaged by chairing several of FPA's educational conferences and serving as a member of the Editorial Advisory Board for FPA's *Journal of Financial Planning*.

I believe in financial planning's ability to change all Americans' lives, including those who do not have a significant amount of assets, and have devoted my professional experience to serving and educating the broader public. Like so many others at the time, this came into focus for me on September 11, 2001. As a life-long New Yorker, I happened to be in San Diego when the towers were struck. Stranded in California, I was distraught knowing the financial uncertainty, loss of income, insurance and settlement issues, disability claims, and a host of other challenges victims would be facing. I resolved that I would use my skills as a CFP® professional to assist victims pro bono (without charging them a fee) and would do what I could to rally others to the cause. Working with FPA, I helped to provide services to impacted families in New York and Washington, D.C. As

² CFP Board conducts and publishes [research](#) on behalf of its certificants to demonstrate the impact of personalized financial advice and financial planning on Americans' well-being. CFP Board also seeks to meet the clear consumer need and demand for competent and ethical financial planners for all Americans – whether in New York City, Kissimmee, Florida, or Toledo, Ohio - by cultivating a high-quality workforce and ensuring the profession can retain the talent it needs to grow. CFP Board fills that need by creating resources for firms in the profession to assist with recruitment, onboarding, training, career development, and retention, and by providing scholarships for qualified individuals to meet the educational requirements for CFP® certification.

the 9/11 Settlement Funds were created, volunteer financial planners helped ensure that free, quality advice could guide families through the myriad decisions that they were forced to make and to help enhance the financial security of families that had already been through so much.

Working with families impacted by 9/11 has been an important part of my career and where my deep commitment to providing pro bono financial planning services took root. Through that experience, I learned that pro bono financial planning plays a vital role in expanding access to financial education and advice for underserved communities because it addresses both immediate financial challenges while also fostering long-term financial stability and literacy. I continued to provide pro bono financial planning to those in my community, including through one-on-one sessions with families struggling to save for their futures while also working to manage everyday realities - reducing payments on high interest credit cards, meeting rent payments, and ensuring they have put enough money away in an emergency fund.

I have been working with others to help the financial planning profession expand its commitment to pro bono services and make an impact on everyday Americans' individual's financial wellness. To encourage other CFP® professionals to offer pro bono services, I became involved in the Foundation for Financial Planning (FFP), a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing pro bono financial planning services to those in need. I was Chair of FFP's Board of Trustees several years ago and still serve on the Board of that organization. In 2017, my commitment to giving back to both the financial planning community and the public was recognized with FPA's Heart of Financial Planning Award. I also received the P. Kemp Fain Jr. Award in 2022, which honors individuals who have made significant contributions to the financial planning profession across service to society, academia, government, and professional activities. I hope that I have inspired other CFP® professionals to pro bono service. CFP Board reports that, in 2025, about 20% of CFP® professionals performed nearly 435,000 pro bono hours³ – a number I am incredibly proud of, though I know we can do more.

As a CFP® professional, I know that access to financial planning for all Americans is crucial. CFP® professionals like me often serve as a client's first meaningful "financial educator," providing skills that extend beyond individual transactions. We work directly with individuals and families across

³ CFP Board News Release, CFP Board Reports Record Growth in CFP® Professionals and Exam Candidates in 2025 (January 15, 2026), <https://www.cfp.net/news/2026/01/cfp-board-reports-record-growth-in-cfp-professionals-and-exam-candidates-in-2025>.

the full spectrum of financial decision-making - budgeting, investing, tax planning, insurance, college planning, retirement planning, and estate planning – providing them financial education and guidance along the way. In this role, CFP® professionals can help provide financial education that can serve as the first line of defense against fraud, like a financial first responder. They may also observe early warning signs of financial distress or fraud - such as unusual account activity, manipulative schemes and scams, or financial exploitations – and are uniquely positioned with their firms to help detect and combat it with tools available through measures like report and hold laws.

Unfortunately, older Americans seem to be disproportionately targeted by fraud, which has become increasingly sophisticated with artificial intelligence allowing fraudsters to clone family members or colleagues or facilitate relationship scams. Too often, victims of such frauds lose a substantial portion of their life savings, money they were relying upon for retirement or to help their families. Unlike younger victims, older Americans frequently do not have time or income to recover if they are victimized. And, because the current tax code provides little recourse for these non-disaster-related losses, many seniors and other victims face a "double hit": the loss of their assets followed by a lack of tax relief. Thank you to Chair Scott, Ranking Member Gillibrand, and Senators Justice and Moody of this Committee for co-sponsoring the CFP Board-endorsed Tax Relief for Victims of Crimes, Scams, and Disasters Act (S.1773), which would help mitigate the devastating impact of fraud on seniors' retirement security, providing a measure of justice and financial stability for victims of crime and those most vulnerable to predatory actors.

The data show a clear need to prioritize financial literacy and the role of financial planning in it. Fewer Americans reported "doing okay" financially (39%) or "living comfortably" (34%) in 2024 than they did just a few years prior.⁴ Of particular concern, only 46% of American adults report having enough savings to cover three months of expenses⁵ and 37% say they would struggle to cover a \$400 emergency without borrowing.⁶ Behind these numbers are real families who are one

⁴ Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, *Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2024*, at 5 (May 2025), <https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/files/2024-report-economic-well-being-us-households-202505.pdf>.

⁵ FINRA Investor Educational Foundation, *Financial Capability in the United States: Results from the FINRA Foundation's National Financial Capability Study*, (2025), <https://www.finrafoundation.org/sites/finrafoundation/files/2025-0707/NFCS--Report-Sixt-Sixth-Ed-Edition-July-2025ion-July-2025.pdf>.

⁶ *Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households*, *supra* note 4, at 41.

unexpected expense away from financial crisis. Every day, Americans face unexpected and rising costs for food, energy, hospital bills, car repairs, home maintenance, childcare, and more. We must focus on uplifting our neighbors before they fall on hard times, which, in turn, helps support our local communities and economies. Indeed, the stability of our economy relies on the aggregate of small, daily financial choices made by informed individuals.

Too often, people do not engage a financial planner in making these choices because they feel that they don't have enough money, or they assume they can access free help online, which unfortunately is often false or misleading at best. The reality is that holistic financial planning goes beyond numbers like income or investable assets and can help everyone align their goals and values with practical strategies for confidence and peace of mind.

CFP® professionals like me also help families anticipate and plan for the "unexpected." There are many situations that may be unexpected for impacted individuals that I see as a financial planner repeatedly. For example, far too often, older people lose their jobs before retirement and are forced to use college funds or retirement funds to make ends meet. In other situations, wage earners become disabled, divorced, or cognitively impaired through early onset of Alzheimer's disease or other illnesses. Other times, people who have done all the right things and are now retiring make less than optimal choices about when to take Social Security to maximize their income or which Medicare program makes the most sense, swayed by commercials or individuals who may not have their best interests in mind.

I experienced this myself when I turned 65, two years ago. My group plan insurance company gave me incorrect information regarding my choices about staying on my group plan versus Medicare. Fortunately, I realized my mistake before it was too late and was able to make a correction. The so-called sandwich generation also faces challenges. There are countless Americans who are trying to save for college for their children and their own retirement while also being financially responsible for their parents. I also personally experienced this with my family. My parents retired at 51 from a family-owned business in the garment center in New York and moved to Florida. Their accountant led them to believe that they had enough money to last through their golden years. However, the first financial plan I made was to show them that they would run out of money within 10 years if they did not change their spending habits. Unfortunately, I was right, and for most of their retirement years, I supported them while trying to save for college for my children, pay my bills, and plan for my own retirement.

So many people I have met over the years are in similar situations. As a CFP® professional, I have resources to address these situations, but what is an average American without access to the same resources to do? You shouldn't have to be wealthy to benefit from financial planning. Americans need greater access to guidance from professionals – like CFP® professionals – to put financial education into action and prepare for the unexpected and achieve lasting financial wellbeing. For that reason, CFP Board supports federal tax incentives to make professional financial advice more accessible and affordable, particularly for middle- and lower-income Americans. By making expert financial guidance more easily reached, we can help all Americans prepare for the unexpected and harden the defenses of vulnerable populations before a single dollar is lost to fraud.

This isn't an opinion, it's a fact. The data demonstrates the benefits of working with a financial planner like a CFP® professional. CFP Board's 10-year Longitudinal Study tracks the impact of holistic financial planning on the financial wellness of American families. The data collected for 2025 show that 51% of people advised by a CFP® professional describe themselves as "living comfortably," which is 20 percentage points higher than non-advised Americans (31%).⁷ Further, 83% of individuals working with a CFP® professional report having at least three months of emergency savings (compared to just 46% of adults nationally), and 94% have confidence in achieving their financial goals.⁸ Working with a CFP® professional allows everyday Americans to build the resilience to weather financial storms and build a sound, dignified financial life, from the earliest days into retirement.

In closing, financial literacy and access to trusted, professional financial guidance are essential to helping older Americans maintain independence, dignity, and security throughout retirement. CFP® professionals play a vital role in educating individuals and families, helping them prepare for the unexpected, and serving as a first line of defense against fraud and financial exploitation. By strengthening financial knowledge, expanding access to competent and ethical financial planning for all Americans, and supporting policies that protect victims and promote resilience, we can help ensure that seniors are better equipped to navigate financial complexity and safeguard the savings

⁷ CFP Board, *Trust, Confidence, Impact: 2025 Financial Planning Longitudinal Study*, <https://www.cfp.net/-/media/files/cfp-board/knowledge/reports-and-research/consumer-surveys/financial-planning-longitudinal-study-2026.pdf>.

⁸ *Id.*

they have worked a lifetime to build. Thank you for your leadership on these issues and for the opportunity to share my perspective today.

Questions for the Record

U.S. SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

"EMPOWERING SENIORS THROUGH FINANCIAL LITERACY: TOOLS TO PROTECT SAVINGS,
PREVENT FRAUD, AND PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE"

APRIL 15, 2026

QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

Sam Kunjukunju**Ranking Member Kirsten Gillibrand****Question:**

A recent survey conducted by the National Council on Aging (NCOA) and the Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement (WISER) found American women reporting significant economic stress. Overall, decreasing numbers of women consider themselves financially secure, sharing that they are not confident about how to plan and save for retirement, with the cost of housing and possible cuts to Medicare and Social Security as top concerns. Low-income women, who are most at risk in their later years, report that they lack confidence in planning for retirement. How do we best tackle socialization practices that lead to improved financial outcomes for women that include access to capital and retirement savings?

Response:

Leading research indicates that improving women's long-term financial outcomes begins with building financial capability early, with schools and workplaces as two important settings for women to develop financial planning skills at a young age. Recognizing the importance of starting young, the ABA Foundation fills a critical national gap by mobilizing bankers to deliver financial education to youth. Through our two nationwide, banker-driven campaigns - Teach Children to Save and Get Smart About Credit - the Foundation reaches kids, teens, and young adults with practical lessons on budgeting saving, interest, credit, and other personal finance topics. These programs help ensure that young people encounter and understand financial concepts long before they face major financial decisions.

These efforts are especially important given the uneven access to financial education across the country. Currently, only 11 states have fully implemented a personal finance course as a high school graduation requirement. Momentum is building, with 19 additional states in progress, but there is still significant room for growth. Expanding financial education requirements in schools would dramatically improve financial knowledge and confidence among young women and set them on a path toward stronger long-term financial outcomes and greater financial security, including in retirement.

U.S. SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

"EMPOWERING SENIORS THROUGH FINANCIAL LITERACY: TOOLS TO PROTECT SAVINGS,
PREVENT FRAUD, AND PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE"

APRIL 15, 2026

QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

Carly Roszkowski**Ranking Member Kirsten Gillibrand****Question:**

A recent survey conducted by the National Council on Aging (NCOA) and the Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement (WISER) found American women reporting significant economic stress. Overall, decreasing numbers of women consider themselves financially secure, sharing that they are not confident about how to plan and save for retirement, with the cost of housing and possible cuts to Medicare and Social Security as top concerns. In addition, surveys point to large majorities of women being supportive of a national paid leave program. Common sense solutions include my FAMILY Act to provide paid family and medical leave, and the Social Security Caregiver Credit Act to provide family caregivers with Social Security credits. Low-income women, who are most at risk in their later years, report that they lack confidence in planning for retirement. What type of programs are most effective in helping these women feel prepared to engage in financial planning? How does unpaid caregiving become an economic penalty in retirement for so many women in this country?

Response:

Programs are most effective when they move beyond one-time financial education and instead provide practical, ongoing, and "just-in-time" support tied to real decisions. As outlined in my testimony, financial literacy works best when it is:

- Timely and decision-based - delivered at key life moments such as job changes, retirement transitions, or the onset of caregiving, when individuals must act on complex financial choices.

- Step-by-step and simplified - offering plain-language guidance and tools (such as calculators or structured programs like AARP's Navigator) that help individuals translate information into decisions.

- Continuous, not one-time - recognizing that financial needs evolve over time and require ongoing support.

- Paired with decision supports and protections - including fraud awareness, trusted contacts, and safeguards that help individuals act with confidence.

For low-income women in particular, effective programs must also address structural barriers, not just knowledge gaps-such as limited access to retirement plans, safe financial products, and workplace-based savings opportunities. Without these supports, education alone is insufficient to improve outcomes.

Unpaid caregiving contributes to economic insecurity in retirement because it often leads to interrupted earnings, reduced savings, and lower Social Security benefits. Many individuals-disproportionately women-leave the workforce early or reduce hours due to caregiving responsibilities. These interruptions limit lifetime earnings and the ability to contribute to retirement accounts, while also reducing Social Security benefits, which are based on earnings history. Caregivers may also face ongoing financial strain, making it more difficult to save or rebuild financial security later. The result is a compounding penalty that follows women into retirement, increasing their risk of financial insecurity and reliance on Social Security as their primary source of income.

Question:

Can you please share how CFPB and FLEC support financial resilience resources for older Americans?

Response:

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) and the Financial Literacy and Education Commission (FLEC) provide coordination, tools, and standards-setting.

- The CFPB provides resources, such as its Managing Someone Else's Money guides, which help caregivers understand fiduciary responsibilities, recognize fraud, and provide suggestions on where to seek assistance. These are especially important as more families assist older adults with financial decision-making.

- The CFPB and Treasury, through FLEC, coordinate a government-wide strategy on financial literacy, helping align federal agencies around shared priorities and improving access to resources.

Combined, these efforts seek to ensure that financial education is not only widely available, but also effective, actionable, and accountable.

Senator Raphael Warnock

Question:

A recent report from the Government Accountability Office identified the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as the federal agencies best positioned to lead a government-wide strategy on anti-scam efforts. However, President Trump fired two members of the five-member FTC in March 2025, and this administration has attempted to eliminate the CFPB.

Cuts to agencies like the FTC, CFPB, and FBI would leave older Americans significantly more vulnerable to scams by weakening the coordinated, multi-layered response required to combat financial fraud. Fraud is a growing and increasingly sophisticated threat, with older adults disproportionately targeted. Effective prevention requires more than education—it depends on enforcement, coordination, and systemic protections across government and industry. Federal agencies play a critical role in investigating fraud, disrupting criminal networks, supporting victims, and promoting protective practices like transaction monitoring and trusted contacts.

How would cuts to these agencies leave seniors vulnerable to scams?

Response:

People work their entire lives to build security for themselves and their families. They are working, raising children, caring for loved ones, fixing things around the house, and waking up every day focused on making ends meet. Government oversight and consumer protection help make it possible for people to go about their lives without having their savings stolen from them. If that role is weakened, more responsibility shifts onto individuals at a time when financial decisions are becoming more complex and scams more sophisticated. Older adults may face heightened risks because they are often balancing managing retirement income, healthcare costs, and caregiving responsibilities all at once, which can be a tremendous challenge. Ensuring that Americans can maintain financial security in later life depends on having systems in place that deter wrongdoing, promote fair practices, and support people when something goes wrong. Protecting people so they can continue living the lives they've worked hard to build - is what matters most.

Question:

What steps should Congress take to ensure these agencies have the capacity to combat scams targeting older adults?

Response:

Congress can strengthen protections for older adults by ensuring that federal agencies have the capacity, coordination, and tools needed to address fraud effectively. Key steps may include:

- Sustaining and strengthening funding and staffing for agencies that investigate and respond to fraud at scale.
- Supporting interagency coordination, building on existing efforts to align enforcement, data-sharing, and public education across government.
- Promoting proven prevention strategies, including:
 - Trusted contact frameworks
 - Transaction monitoring and alerts
 - Employee training programs (such as those used in financial institutions)
- Investing in public awareness and victim support, recognizing that early intervention can significantly reduce financial losses and long-term harm.
- Encouraging outcome-based evaluation, to ensure resources are directed toward the most effective anti-scam interventions.

Congress can strengthen protections for older adults by ensuring that federal anti-fraud efforts are coordinated, well-resourced, and focused on stopping scams before losses occur. There has been bipartisan recognition that combating scams requires a whole-of-government approach, and several legislative efforts reflect that understanding:

- S. 3355, the National Strategy for Combatting Scams Act would bring together federal agencies, consumer advocates, and industry leaders to create a coordinated plan to fight scams. By requiring collaboration across more than a dozen federal agencies, the bill helps cut through red tape, improve data sharing, and speed up enforcement when scams happen. It also makes sure the voices of those most affected-like older adults, survivors, and people with disabilities-are part of the solution and importantly, it prioritizes making resources easier to access providing for more effective recovery for those who've been targeted.

- S. 2950, the Scam Compound Accountability and Mobilization Act (SCAM Act) would bring together federal agencies, law enforcement, and international partners to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to counter scam compounds.

- S. 4055, the Senior Security Act of 2025 would establish a Senior Investor Task Force within the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The task force will coordinate across SEC divisions to strengthen safeguards and stop financial predators from scamming seniors out of their savings.

- H.R. 7215, the Stop SCAMS Act would create a long-overdue, unified strategy to combat these crimes by tasking the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) with organizing a coordinated, government-wide effort to prevent and respond to scams. It would also align inter-agency actions, definitions, and data to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of scam-fighting efforts.

- S.2544, the GUARD Act would provide state and local law enforcement with federal grants to hire and train staff and secure specialized software and other tools to improve their capacity to conduct fraud investigations. This will ensure law enforcement has the tools they need to lock up the criminals who victimize older Americans.

- H.R. 6426, the Stop Scams Against Seniors Act, would empower state, local, and federal law enforcement agencies to better combat the growing epidemic of financial fraud targeting older Americans by authorizing federal grants to support Elder Justice Task Forces nationwide, improving coordination and investigative capacity to pursue and prosecute criminals who exploit older adults.

Taken together, these legislative efforts underscore the importance of sustained capacity, coordination, and prevention. By investing in these approaches, Congress can help ensure that older Americans are better protected from scams while preserving their ability to live the lives they have worked hard to build.

U.S. SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

"EMPOWERING SENIORS THROUGH FINANCIAL LITERACY: TOOLS TO PROTECT SAVINGS,
PREVENT FRAUD, AND PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE"

APRIL 15, 2026

QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

Scott Kahan**Ranking Member Kirsten Gillibrand****Question:**

Twenty-three percent of people age fifty and older care for either an adult or a child with a disability. For this population, the financial and physical well-being of the people they care for can be a great source of anxiety and stress. This stress is especially real for parents who must plan for the day their disabled child will need to live without them. What considerations do parents of disabled children, who play a huge role ensuring their loved ones have their basic needs met, have when they plan for when they outlive their children?

Response:

This is an important issue that requires careful planning by families. There are two primary considerations. First, who will be responsible for a person with a disability? Many times, parents rely on a family member, often a sibling, to care for a disabled sibling when the parents are gone. This puts an undue burden on that potential caretaker. They may be prepared for this responsibility, or they may not want this obligation. Depending on the severity of the person's disability, a group home may be a consideration. Finding the right place is often difficult, especially if the family lacks the financial resources to afford the flexibility to choose one.

Second, how will parents financially protect the disabled child? The average family does not have the resources to provide for the long-term care needed. Parents also may want to leave an inheritance split equally among all their children. In cases like this, parents are sometimes forced to leave less or nothing to other children, which can cause resentment among family members. Proper financial planning is essential early on to create a long-term plan that may include trusts, insurance, and government benefits. Some parents can purchase life insurance to create funds upon their death. However, this can be expensive and assumes that the parents are insurable. Others may create Special Needs Trusts. For many families, ABLE (Achieving a Better Life Experience) accounts are an important and often underutilized vehicle. Established under federal law, ABLE accounts allow individuals with disabilities to save money in a tax-advantaged account without losing eligibility for federal benefit programs. They can be used for qualified disability expenses, including housing, education, transportation, and health care. For families who may not have sufficient resources for a Special Needs Trust, an ABLE account can be an accessible and meaningful first step toward protecting a disabled loved one's financial future.

Question:

In April 2024, the Biden Administration advanced the Retirement Security Rule to enhance worker retirement savings' interests by adopting a broader definition of an investment advice fiduciary under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA). In March 2026, the Trump Administration abandoned the rule, after declining to appeal a court ruling that vacated the rule. As a certified financial planner, can you explain why it's important to you as a professional to provide financial advice that is wholly in your client's best interest? Further, why is the requirement to provide trusted investment advice free from overcharges a cornerstone of the CFP Board of Standards, and do you have any recommendations in this area for your broader industry?

Response:

With Americans increasingly responsible for their own retirement savings, the need for trustworthy, professional guidance has never been greater. CFP Board research overwhelmingly shows that when Americans work with a financial professional for advice, they desire and expect that person to act in the client's best interests. This is an obligation that more than 109,000 CFP® professionals already com-

mit to CFP Board to uphold, yet hundreds of thousands of other financial professionals do not, while calling themselves wealth managers, financial advisors, or financial planners. This creates real confusion - and real consequences - for the public.

Conflicts of interest are present in every business model. They most commonly arise from the receipt of compensation from a client, but there are other kinds. When providing financial advice to a client, a CFP® professional must avoid conflicts or make full disclosure of all material conflicts of interest with the client that could affect the professional relationship, obtain the client's informed consent, and manage the conflict in the client's best interests. This is important because the consequences of conflicted advice are substantial. Investors may only experience small differences in fees each year. Over time, however, these small differences can lead to enormous erosion of account balances and significantly impact financial security.

My recommendation for the industry is to adopt a legal fiduciary standard for all financial advice. This would include an obligation to fully disclose and manage all conflicts of interest, such as compensation. If a firm or financial professional earns commissions, the client should be made aware of them. If they pay fees, the client should see the fees on a statement from the custodian. Full disclosure and managing conflicts should be a requirement so that a client can decide who to work with. This would help restore consumer confidence.

Question:

More than half a million Georgians have left the Affordable Care Act (ACA) Marketplace since January 2025, following the expiration of enhanced premium tax credits. Across the country, nearly five million ACA enrollees between the ages of 50 and 64 are facing increased monthly premiums for health insurance.

Based on your experience as a financial planner, how does a drastic increase in monthly health insurance premiums affect early retirees' ability to cover health care costs?

Response:

For early retirees, one of the hardest decisions is how to choose and pay for their medical coverage. If they are within 18 months of age 65, they are eligible for COBRA. With COBRA, though, many people do not realize they are now paying the full cost of insurance, not just the employee share they paid while working. The other concern is their spouse's age. If the spouse is younger, they have a longer gap to cover before they are eligible for Medicare. Also, people need to buy a supplemental plan to cover many of the costs that Medicare does not cover.

People who planned to retire early may now need to delay retirement until age 65. Often, though, retiring early is not the employee's choice. They are forced out of the workforce by a layoff, a health event, or a caregiving obligation and then face paying a much larger amount for medical coverage. This will mean drawing from retirement savings sooner than expected. They may also need to sacrifice other expenses, such as travel, home repairs, necessary medications, etc. If they choose to take on the risk and forgo insurance to cut costs, they risk a single serious illness wiping out their retirement savings quickly.

Question:

How can Congress improve early retirees' access to affordable health insurance through the Marketplace?

Response:

One of the most significant financial planning challenges facing Americans today is the cost of healthcare coverage in the years between leaving work and becoming eligible for Medicare at age 65. Whether that gap is covered through COBRA, a marketplace plan, or a spouse's employer coverage, the financial burden can be substantial and, for many, prohibitive. In my over 40 years of helping clients, I have seen how healthcare costs during this gap can be far higher than anticipated and destabilize a sound financial plan. From a financial planning perspective, clients need predictability. Policy solutions that reduce uncertainty, improve affordability, and expand coverage options for Americans in the 60-64 age range would meaningfully strengthen retirement security across the income spectrum.

Statements for the Record



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April 14, 2026

The Honorable Rick Scott
Chairman, Senate Special Committee on Aging
G16 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand
Ranking Member, Senate Special Committee on Aging
628 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: April 15, 2026 Hearing—"Empowering Seniors Through Financial Literacy: Tools to Protect Savings, Prevent Fraud, and Promote Independence"

Dear Chairman Scott and Ranking Member Gillibrand:

On behalf of the Defense Credit Union Council (DCUC), I respectfully submit this letter for the record in support of the Committee's April 15 hearing on senior financial literacy and fraud prevention. Older Americans are both a growing share of our population and a frequent target of increasingly sophisticated financial scams; adults 60+ reported nearly **\$2.4 billion** in fraud losses in 2024, while federal partners recognize that underreporting can mask substantially greater harm. DCUC and our member credit unions—serving military members, veterans, and their families worldwide—stand ready to partner with the Committee to protect savings, prevent fraud, and promote financial independence for seniors, including military retirees and older veterans.

DCUC is the trusted resource for credit unions on military and veteran matters, with a mission to champion the interests of credit unions serving military and veteran communities. The Council is comprised of **220+ credit unions** with **40+ million memberships** and **\$525+ billion in assets**, providing meaningful reach for evidence-based financial education and consumer protection initiatives. Our members' experience includes serving older adults navigating retirement transitions, VA benefits, survivor benefits, and caregiving responsibilities—moments when the risk of fraud, exploitation, and costly financial mistakes increases.

The urgency is clear. In addition to FTC-reported losses, the FBI's IC3 data reflect **\$4.885 billion** in 2024 losses tied to elder-fraud complaints, with 147,127 complaints reported. Federal regulators have also emphasized stronger prevention-and-response controls—including employee training, use of "trusted contact" measures, and (where authorized) transaction holds or disbursement delays when elder financial exploitation is suspected. These approaches work best when paired with practical financial literacy tools, clear reporting pathways, and timely recovery options.

DCUC members support seniors through both education and "fraud friction"—the smart, member-centered steps that help stop a scam before money leaves an account. Public DCUC materials highlight several examples that align with the hearing's theme:

Serving Those Who Serve Our Country

- **Veteran and retiree financial education resources:** DCUC publishes financial education tools spanning the military lifecycle “to separation or retirement,” and offers a “Veterans Guide” reviewed by the Veterans Benefits Administration.
- **Benefits access and safe banking on-ramps:** Through DCUC support for credit unions’ participation in the Veterans Benefits Banking Program (VBBP), participating institutions offer free checking for veterans receiving monthly benefit deposits and may provide education/counseling support to veterans who otherwise cannot qualify to open an account.
- **Targeted fraud prevention practices:** DCUC has described defense credit unions’ retiree-focused classes and targeted alerts aimed at preventing scams such as “grandparent fraud,” fake VA benefits calls, and tech-support schemes.

In light of the Committee’s hearing objectives, we respectfully recommend that the Committee advance the following policy priorities through oversight, bipartisan recommendations, and interagency coordination:

1. **Strengthen “stop-the-loss” authority and recovery pathways.** Encourage federal agencies and Congress to expand workable frameworks for transaction holds/disbursement delays when exploitation is suspected, and to support faster, clearer payment-reversal and recovery processes—especially for scams that pressure seniors into rapid transfers.
2. **Invest in scalable, community-delivered senior financial literacy and fraud-prevention initiatives.** Support federal grantmaking and public-private partnerships that enable trusted local institutions—including credit unions—to deliver practical, culturally competent education for seniors and caregivers, with measurable outcomes and continuous updates reflecting new scam typologies.
3. **Modernize and target federal financial literacy infrastructure.** As DCUC recently recommended to Treasury, prioritize improvements to federal financial literacy tools (including accessibility and tailored resources for older Americans) and elevate cybersecurity and fraud prevention as core components of national strategy.
4. **Improve reporting and coordination across hotlines, law enforcement, and financial institutions.** Promote interoperability and public awareness for credible reporting channels—such as the Committee’s Fraud Hotline—so older adults and caregivers can quickly learn next steps, preserve evidence, and connect with the right authorities and financial institutions.

DCUC stands ready to provide the Committee with (a) a witness for future hearings or staff briefings, (b) anonymized trend information and case examples from defense credit unions serving older veterans and military retirees, and (c) draft language or technical assistance to support practical, victim-centered reforms. DCUC also welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with Committee staff on education pilots that leverage existing federal resources and community distribution through credit unions.

Please contact me at Jason.Stverak@dcuc.org with any questions about DCUC’s comments or any matters relating to credit unions.

Sincerely,



Jason Stverak
Chief Advocacy Officer
DCUC