

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



CHAIRMAN Special Committee on Aging

Chairman Bob Casey's Opening Statement "Stopping Senior Scams: Empowering Communities to Fight Fraud" September 22, 2022

The hearing will come to order. We convene today to discuss a topic of the utmost importance to the Aging Committee: fighting frauds and scams targeting seniors. While these predatory schemes have existed for decades, we know that the pandemic has only exacerbated this issue, as fraudsters preyed on fear and uncertainty surrounding the virus. Federal agencies, state governments and advocates all warn of con artists who will do among the following: they'll pose as federal and state agencies to steal benefits; they will falsify romantic relationships to gain a senior's trust; and by way of a third example, peddle fake health insurance and cures for the virus. Scammers are also using new payment methods, making losses difficult to trace.

The Federal Trade Commission reports that gift cards are the main payment method used by scammers to request and steal money from older adults. In 2021, 27 percent of adults 60 and older who lost money paid a scammer using a gift card or a reloadable card. Peer-to-peer payment apps, like Zelle, Venmo, CashApp and PayPal, are also increasingly used by scammers. Today, Aurelia Costigan from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania will share her experience with a peer-to-peer payment scam. Ms. Costigan's story is all too common. Scammers' requests of payments from seniors by way of these apps have increased exponentially, from 2 percent in 2017 to 10 percent in 2021. That's why I recently led a letter to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau urging the agency to move forward with guidance, guidance to protect older adults from con artists using these apps. I'd like to thank the members of this Committee who joined the letter: Senator Blumenthal, Senator Warren and Senator Gillibrand. Strong guidance and enforcement are critical, as is education on preventing and responding to these scams.

I am also proud that my Stop Senior Scams Act was signed into law in March of this year. Thanks to Senator Moran, Senator Kelly and Ranking Member Scott for working alongside me and others to pass this important legislation. Thank you, Ranking Member Scott for that work. This law creates a Senior Scams Advisory Council to ensure that banks and other businesses have both the information and the tools that they need to train employees to identify and respond to scams. We're grateful to the Federal Trade Commission for its work to lead this effort and pleased that this new Council will hold its first convening one week from today.

Finally, Ranking Member Scott and I are releasing our 2022 Fraud Book. Here is it, and I'll hold up both versions in English and in Spanish. We're releasing this, as many of you know, we've done this on an annual basis. But this is the 2022 book, which arms older adults with the

information that they need to protect themselves from scammers. This new and improved Fraud Book is available today in both English and in Spanish. The Fraud Book highlights the 10 most common scams reported to the Committee's Fraud Hotline, which is staffed Monday through Friday 9am to 5pm Eastern Time. Seniors and their loved ones can seek assistance with reporting fraud and getting connected to resources. The Fraud Hotline's toll-free number is 1-855-303-9470. I'll read that again. 1-855-303-9470. I am proud of the Committee's bipartisan leadership on this issue, but we know that we have a lot more work to do. We have a sacred duty to protect seniors and their families against these scammers, these criminals. I look forward to continuing to work together on this and I'll now turn to Ranking Member Scott for his opening statement.