

Ranking Member Tim Scott, Opening Statement

Hearing: Financial Literacy: Addressing the Unique Just-in-Time Decisions Older Americans and People with Disabilities Face

Date: 01/13/21

Let me thank Chairman Casey for holding this really important hearing on financial literacy.

Financial literacy is critical to learn as early in life as possible.

Like the chairman mentioned, as a testament to the importance of financial literacy for older Americans, the committee is working on our annual bipartisan report, and this year it is on financial literacy.

As a kid who was raised in a single-parent household mired in poverty, but blessed with a loving mother, I understand and appreciate the importance of learning financial principles as early in life as possible.

It is one of the reasons why I co-chair the financial literacy caucus along with Senator Jack Reed. Since 2015, we have declared April as Financial Literacy Month through a resolution in a bipartisan fashion.

South Carolina is one of the 21 states that requires high school students to take a course on financial literacy.

There's a non-profit in our state called SC Economics, whose mission is to provide training and resources to educators.

They have trained nearly 2,500 teachers and reached more than 235,000 students in South Carolina with their financial literacy curriculum.

It is never too late to learn the importance of financial literacy.

[Part] of my focus [is] making sure that every American — and particularly our senior Americans — have an opportunity to understand and appreciate and to benefit from financial literacy.

One of the reasons why this is so important for our seniors, we can see demonstrated through an experience at Citizens Bank in a small rural town in South Carolina called Johnsonville in Florence County.

It has trained its employees to look out for suspicious activity and provide seniors the support they need.

The example that I'm talking about was when a 60-year-old disabled senior came into the bank and asked for an \$8,000 cashier's check. The trained employee understood that this was unusual for this senior and proceeded to ask a few important questions.

Ultimately, the bank employee discovered that the senior was involved in a romance scam and was able to stop the senior from sending \$8,000 to someone and never seeing the money again.

Educating our seniors on when it is safe and when it is not safe to transfer money is a critical component of financial literacy.

I am also pleased to have dedicated and committed South Carolinians like Dorothea Bernique of Increasing H.O.P.E., who has helped countless seniors through financial literacy programs and helped them to maintain and to achieve their version of the American Dream.

To have financial literacy, we must have financial inclusion. That is why it's so important to continue to work in many ways to advance the cause of equal access to opportunity throughout our country.

Building on financial inclusion, I have also introduced — along with Senator Joe Manchin — the Credit Access and Inclusion Act of 2021, to expand access to credit for an estimated 45 million Americans with no credit history.

When you pay your bills on time, it should help improve your credit. It's kind of that simple.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.