

Ranking Member Tim Scott (R-S.C.)
Opening Statement
Full Committee Hearing
September 12, 2024 at 10:00 AM

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for being here today – all the witnesses.

First and foremost, I want to start today by thanking our law enforcement partners at the state and the federal level.

Every day, our law enforcement members work tirelessly to combat crime—including financial crime – and to protect and defend victims in every community around the country.

And that’s exactly what the “frauds” and “scams” are. They are crimes, and the criminals who commit these crimes should be punished accordingly.

I also want to acknowledge our regulators, both at the state and the federal level, as well as our financial institutions and companies that work tirelessly to combat and prevent criminal actors from taking advantage of hardworking Americans.

This includes their critical work educating consumers on the warning signs of popular frauds and scams.

The first step to stopping fraud is ensuring people are equipped with the tools to recognize the very fraud that so many of us fall victim to.

Criminals are inherently looking to benefit themselves without regard for the wellbeing of others—and certainly without respect of the law.

And, unfortunately, criminals often prey on our most vulnerable, which of course would be our seniors.

Unfortunately, it seems almost daily that I hear a horrible story of a hardworking American who worked their entire lives forced to come out of retirement after having their savings wiped out by the scams.

My time as the Ranking Member of the Aging Committee allowed me to learn a great deal more about these types of crimes.

In particular, the severe detriment they have on our nation's seniors.

That is why I advocated to holding hearings directly focusing on these types of fraud and issued an annual "Fraud Book" to bring about more awareness of these scams.

Today, I look forward to hearing from the panel of witnesses in front of us today so that we can understand the new and emerging solutions to this epidemic.

And it is my hope that this will not simply turn into a blame game of who's responsible – whether it's financial industries whether it's the scammers. We need all hands on deck to solve the problem that we face today and to help protect more Americans from the challenges that they have once their savings are gone.

I believe, frankly, that part of the solution starts with education.

And through my time in Congress, I've continued to promote financial education and financial literacy, because those as my top priorities allows us to address the very challenges that so many Americans face.

If we can help more Americans access financial education, we can help them have the tools to both protect themselves, as well as achieve financial freedom.

This is why I am so pleased to have Carri Grube Lybarker with us today. She's the Administrator of the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs before us today and she will share her perspective and some of the things you've been doing to help combat these challenges.

I love this "ditch the pitch." Sometimes the fewer words you use the more you actually say – the more effective you are at communicating. And I will say in a world that is unfortunately moving at a faster pace, the longer we have to listen sometimes the less we actually absorb. And so, "ditch the pitch" gives us at home in South Carolina an opportunity to learn ways to reduce the impact of scams and frankly, to detect them quickly, and perhaps avoid them all together.

Our nation's seniors are not the only ones affected by these crimes, and these criminals are looking for new targets every single day.

Criminals are unfortunately smart and agile.

Just like we are working to use new technologies to drive efficiencies and choice—criminals are using new technologies to pad their own pockets at someone else's expense.

That's why we must adapt and continually work to innovate. We must also work to educate and combat criminals using these same technologies for ill gain.

And let's not forget what we heard in February when this committee examined check fraud, old technologies are also being used to exploit in an increasing frequent manner.

I'll close like I started.

I am grateful for the work our law enforcement, our regulators, and our financial institutions – what they're doing together to combat and prevent financial crime.

And I am really proud of a lot of the good work being done to better educate people of all ages on the frauds and scams they face.

Today, I hope we hear other ideas on how we can improve our technology, education, and other approaches to stopping these crimes—all the while making sure we are not incentivizing new, or additional, criminal acts.

Thank you.