

Safeguarding Older Adults from Scamming Practices and Financial Abuse

Each year, more than 369,000 incidents of financial abuse targeting older adults are reported to authorities in the United States, causing an estimated \$4.8 billion in losses. According to the Federal Trade Commission, the vast majority of these frauds go unreported, with victims reluctant to come forward. Older adults hold more wealth as an age group, thus presenting an appealing target for scammers. Unfortunately, victims of these incidents seldom are able to recoup their financial losses, and many older adults have lost life savings to these practices, with many past their working years and unable to recover. Scams include romance scams, grandparent scams, technical support fraud, and other methods.

Unfortunately, these incidents have become so commonplace that law enforcement agencies and adult protective services lack the resources to address them all. Further complicating matters is many of these practices are originating overseas, with stolen funds quickly converted into offshore accounts or cryptocurrency. Elder fraud complaints to the FBI’s Internet Crime Complaint Center rose by 14% in 2023, with

MOTION

SOLIS _____

MITCHELL _____

HAHN _____

BARGER _____

HORVATH _____

losses increasing by 11.

In Los Angeles County, the Adult Protective Services (APS) program within the Aging and Disabilities Department (AD), a crisis prevention social services program investigating cases of abuse, neglect, and exploitation for older adults or those with disabilities. This includes victims of financial abuse, including older or dependent adults who are wrongfully defrauded out of money or property. These services are provided without regard to income, resources, or immigration status. APS provides their clients with a service plan to maintain their safety, health, and independence, including trained professionals to advocate on the behalf of those who have experienced financial abuse. AD also operates an Elder Abuse Hotline, which investigates reports of physical or emotional abuse, abandonment, or self-neglect, as well as incidents of financial abuse.

The Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA) launched the initiative *Smarter Seniors*, helping older adults protect their financial well-being. DCBA provides resources from trusted agencies to help older adults from becoming victims of fraud, as well as improving overall wellbeing. DCBA also has prepared fact sheets educating residents on common scams, such as unexpected Medicare calls, Government Impostor scams, unexpected emails or text messages, fake contact tracer scams, and safeguarding against malicious actors attempting to purchase COVID-19 cards. Furthermore, DCBA hosts workshops helping older adults protect their money while uplifting common scams.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors instruct the Aging and Disabilities Department and the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs host a community engagement campaign to educate residents on scamming practices and

elder abuse, with the engagement campaign including:

1. A series of informational workshops in multiple languages located at senior centers and community centers across the County informing older adults of best practices to detect and protect themselves against financial abuse and fraud, prioritizing areas with high incidence of elder abuse should be prioritized, with at least one event in each Supervisorial district within 210 days of passage of the motion;
2. An awareness campaign including elder education programs, caregiver training, and promotion of fraud hotlines and County resources;
3. Collaboration on the creation of elder advocacy groups, dedicated to elder rights and protection against financial abuse; and
4. Outreach to local municipal entities, including neighborhood watch groups, to inform them of how neighbors and local businesses can safeguard elderly residents in their communities.

I, FURTHER, MOVE that the Aging and Disabilities Department, in partnership with the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs, collaborate with managed care plans to advocate for and develop enhanced screening processes for Medi-Cal providers to prevent fraudulent entities from participating.

I, FURTHER, MOVE that the Aging and Disabilities Department and the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs report back on the results of the above directives in 60 days, including the planned schedule for the workshops.

#

HLS:ac