

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade  
Hearing on “Hearing on “Fighting Fraud Against the Elderly, an Update”  
October 23, 2015**

*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

Elder fraud is a serious problem that threatens the very financial stability and wellbeing of our seniors and their families. Sadly, it's a problem that we are very familiar with in Michigan, and is an issue confronting every community and state. Seniors have always been targets for fraudsters, but the digital age has especially increased opportunities for predators of the elderly.

From the Greatest Generation to the Baby Boomers, our retired and elderly population is projected to grow rapidly – in Michigan and across the country - and with it, the number of potential targets for elder fraud. By 2020, the number of Americans over 65 years old is projected to be 54.8 million, an increase of about 14 million since the last census.

For those who have been unable to keep a family member from being defrauded in a scam, it is a heartbreaking occurrence. While some may view it as a “petty crime,” it is not.

The consequences are real. And the effects are lasting. When fraudsters trick the elderly into parting with often limited retirement funds, they take more than just money. Many of these schemes also rob victims of their independence, dignity, and self-worth. These are possessions that money can't buy and that are difficult to reclaim.

Make no mistake - the criminals who target the elderly put significant time and resources into their efforts. In one conspiracy, fraudsters posed as the victim's grandson and grandson's lawyer, claiming he was in a Mexican jail. These criminals took almost all of the victim's savings with elaborate stories. In another type of scheme, callers target older Americans and develop various relationships with them over the phone, eventually leading to the victim sending money under false impressions.

These scams often require extensive profiling of the intended victims and persistent contact – in other words, material dedication to the crime. Criminals with these kinds of resources to commit elaborate and evolving forms of fraud warrant robust responses from government at all levels.

We in Congress, as well as regulators and law enforcement owe it to seniors to crack down on this despicable activity and ensure enough is being done to stop the perpetrators.

We need to make sure that our government response also allocates the appropriate resources to protecting our seniors in every community. I appreciate the diligent work being done at the FTC, Michigan Tech, Consumer Reports, the CFPB, and Cook County to put a stop to elder fraud and I look forward to today's very important discussion.

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