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United States Senate

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6400

(202) 224-5364

May 18, 2023

The Honorable Lina M. Khan
Chair
Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20580

Dear Chair Khan:

As members of the Special Committee on Aging, we write to request information on your efforts to protect older Americans from increasing threats posed by artificial intelligence-related (AI) frauds and scams. Combatting frauds and scams has been a longstanding priority for the Committee across annual hearings, the Committee's fraud hotline, and its fraud book. You recently noted how "generative AI risks turbocharging fraud."[1] While AI contains significant promise as an innovative technology, it can also be manipulated by malicious actors targeting vulnerable populations, particularly older Americans.

Federal Trade Commission (FTC) warnings have noted that scammers can use AI-powered technology, including voice clones and chatbots, to create deceptive emails, phone calls, and images in order to take advantage of consumers and targeted populations.[2] Recent reports suggest that such scams are a growing problem. Voice-cloning technology in particular may facilitate imposter scams by allowing scammers to closely replicate an individual's voice using just a short audio sample. In one case, a scammer used this approach to convince an older couple that the scammer was their grandson in desperate need of money to make bail, and the couple almost lost $9,400 before a bank official alerted them to the potential fraud.[3] Similarly, in Arizona, a scammer posing as a kidnapper used voice-cloning technology to duplicate the sounds of a mother's crying daughter and demand ransom.[4]

Chatbots can also be used to mimic a writing style, find personal information, and generate more convincing fake documents, while "deep fake" videos and other AI-generated images can provide scammers with another avenue for upgraded impersonation. For older Americans, targeted by countless scams every year that result in multimillion-dollar financial losses, anxiety, and even anguish, this threat of powerful, newly enhanced fraud is acute.

As the FTC considers reasonable strategies to safeguard older Americans from frauds and scams, we request that you provide the following information by June 20th, 2023:

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[1] Lina M. Khan, "We Must Regulate A.I. Here's How," *New York Times*. May 3, 2023.
[2] Michael Atleson, "Chatbots, deepfakes, and voice clones: AI deception for sale," *Federal Trade Commission*. March 20, 2023. https://www.ftc.gov/business-guidance/blog/2023/03/chatbots-deepfakes-voice-clones-ai-deception-sale.
[3] Pranshu Verma, "They thought loved ones were calling for help. It was an AI scam," *Washington Post*. March 5, 2023.
[4] Caroline Mimbs Nyce, "It's Time to Protect Yourself From AI Voice Scams," *The Atlantic*. April 27, 2023. https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2023/04/ai-voice-cloning-imposter-scams/673879/.

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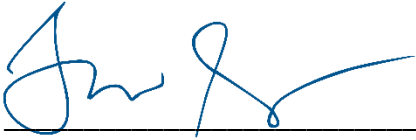RAPHAEL WARNOCK, GEORGIA
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1. What is the FTC's understanding of recent developments in AI-related scams?

    a. What, if any, analyses are available to help policymakers better respond to them?

    b. How is the pace of innovation and improvements in AI technology likely to influence the incidence of these scams?

    c. Are there any specific policy suggestions that FTC can highlight to protect older Americans from these scams?

2. What information and data does the FTC have on the prevalence of AI-related scams and accompanying risks?

    a. How do these scams affect older Americans?

    b. Are older Americans at higher risk of being targeted?

3. What steps is the FTC taking or preparing to protect older Americans from AI-related scams?

    a. To what extent is the FTC working with other agencies and state and local governments to identify and combat the unique threat and challenge these scams pose to older Americans?

    b. To what extent is the FTC partnering with private sector actors to develop options that could better protect older Americans from these scams?

4. Is the FTC preparing to update its counter-scam educational and awareness materials, including the "*Pass It On*" campaign's materials directly intended for older Americans, to account for the rising risks of AI-related scams?

    a. What other resources can FTC make available on these scams to help inform and protect older Americans?

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Mike Braun
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Special Committee on Aging

Robert P. Casey
United States Senator
Chairman, Special Committee on Aging

United States Senate

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

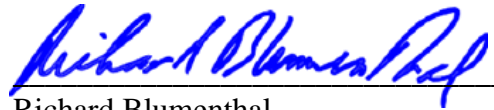WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6400

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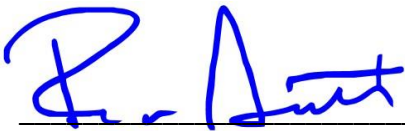Special Committee on Aging

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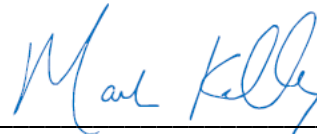United States Senator
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Rick Scott
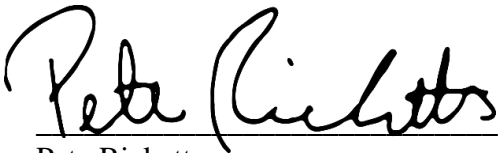United States Senator
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Elizabeth Warren
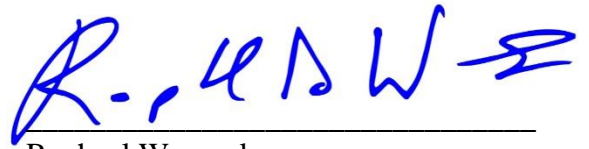United States Senator
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JD Vance
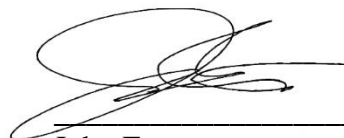United States Senator
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