

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 22, 2020

The Honorable Joseph J. Simons  
Chairman  
Federal Trade Commission  
600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20580

Dear Chairman Simons:

We write to express our concerns regarding recent reports of an increase in holiday scams targeting seniors and to ask what actions the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is taking to better protect and educate seniors.

More than 17 million confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) cases have now been identified in the United States,<sup>1</sup> and many of the most serious cases have affected seniors. At the same time, recent reports have highlighted a 14 percent increase<sup>2</sup> in holiday shopping scams, including holiday scams targeting seniors—arguably the population most vulnerable to both the coronavirus and bad actors. These scams range from charity scams soliciting holiday donations for fake charities to phone calls falsely offering immediate vaccinations to protect against COVID-19 infection.<sup>3</sup> Other reports have highlighted a 440 percent increase from October to November in the volume of shipping-related scam messages—fake emails and texts about delivery and tracking information sent by scammers to consumers in order to retrieve their financial account information.<sup>4</sup>

Given the seriousness of this issue, we urge the FTC to take action to better protect seniors and ensure they understand their recourse options should they fall victim to these scams. While the FTC has taken steps—including publishing consumer protection blogs<sup>5</sup>—to protect seniors from holiday scams, additional actions must be taken. We respectfully request that you respond to the following questions:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

<sup>2</sup> [14% rise in suspected 2020 holiday weekend e-commerce fraud](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Holiday Scams and Fraud 2020: What Seniors Need to Know - Companions For Seniors](#); [BBB Scam Alert: A COVID-19 vaccine is on the way. So are the scams.](#); [Tech Matters: Older people face increased threat of scams this holiday season](#) | [Business | standard.net](#); [Reports of holiday scams targeting seniors on the rise \(kwwl.com\)](#); [Season's Cheatings: Beware of Holiday Scams. An AARP National Survey of Adults 18+. Infographic](#) (More than 1 in U.S. adults say they received a donation request to a charity that was likely fraudulent).

<sup>4</sup> [Delivery scams surge to ring in the holiday season - TechRepublic](#); *See also* [Holiday Shopping Phishing Scams Skyrocket Amid Pandemic - WCCO | CBS Minnesota \(cbslocal.com\)](#) (Local Minnesota news reports that nearly one-fifth of online shoppers claim to have been a victim a cybercrime.)

<sup>5</sup> [This holiday season, help friends and family avoid a scam | FTC Consumer Information](#); *See also* [Grandma got a scam call from a reindeer | FTC Consumer Information](#).

1. What additional measures is the FTC planning to better protect seniors and assist them as they become victims of holiday scams?
2. How is the FTC working with other federal agencies to combat holiday scams?
3. What efforts is the FTC currently undertaking to educate seniors about holiday scams and how to protect themselves?
4. What additional resources does the FTC need in order to better protect seniors from holiday scams and educate them on how to prevent it?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this serious matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



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Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



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Jerry Moran  
United States Senator