

August 10, 2020

ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL URGES CONGRESS TO PASS LEGISLATION TO PROTECT SENIORS WHO ARE VICTIMS OF FRAUD

Chicago — Attorney General Kwame Raoul, as part of a bipartisan coalition of 44 attorneys general, is urging the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to include Edith's Bill in pending COVID-19 relief legislation. The bipartisan legislation would amend the Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA) to make seniors who are victims of fraud eligible for reimbursement through the Crime Victims Fund, which allows states to provide compensation to victims.

Due to COVID-19, many seniors are isolated away from families and support networks. [In a letter submitted today](#), Raoul and the coalition point out that scammers are taking advantage of the pandemic and seniors' more limited contact with loved ones by targeting seniors.

"Scammers often prey on seniors, and that is even more true during the COVID-19 pandemic that has isolated many seniors from their families and loved ones," Raoul said. "I am urging Congress to help states protect seniors by making them eligible to receive reimbursement from the Crime Victims Fund if they have been the victims of scams."

Edith's Bill, or the Edith Shorougian Senior Victims of Fraud Compensation Act (S. 3487/H.R. 7620) also will amend VOCA so that penalties and fines from deferred prosecution and non-prosecution agreements, which can include white collar criminal conduct against seniors, are deposited into the Crime Victims Fund.

Across all states, there has been a surge in COVID-19 scams targeting vulnerable seniors. For example, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General has warned that fraudsters "are offering COVID-19 tests to Medicare beneficiaries in exchange for personal details, including Medicare information," one of many COVID-19 scams targeting seniors.

Even after the pandemic, it is widely expected that seniors will continue to be targeted by fraudsters. Adding fraud against seniors as an eligible reimbursement expense under VOCA allows seniors victimized by fraud to receive the financial relief they deserve. States would be incentivized but not mandated by this legislation to provide compensation to victims of senior fraud.

Today's letter is Attorney General Raoul's latest action to protect Illinois residents from scams connected to COVID-19. Previously, Attorney General Raoul encouraged people to be vigilant for emails asking recipients to verify personal data, such as Medicare or Medicaid information, in exchange for receiving economic stimulus funds or other benefits from the government. Raoul has also warned Illinois residents to ignore offers for COVID-19 vaccinations and home test kits that are made online, in stores, through electronic messages or over the phone.

People can report scams to the Attorney General's office by visiting the [Attorney General's website](#) or by calling Raoul's Consumer Fraud Hotline (1-800-386-5438 in Chicago, 1-800-243-0618 in Springfield and 1-800-243-0607 in Carbondale).

Joining Raoul in sending the letter are the attorneys general of Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Northern Mariana Islands, Ohio,

Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin.