



Mayor's Office of Consumer Information

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NEWSLETTER

Volume 4: Spring 2024 Special Edition

We're your Local Eyes & Ears

The (Springfield) Mayor's Office of Consumer Information (MOCI) is your Local Consumer Program (LCP) serving Hampden County and parts of Worcester County. It is funded by and works in cooperation with the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office (AGO).

Since 2000, the MOCI has helped hundreds of thousands of consumers, recovering over \$15 million dollars as a result of its advocacy efforts. We have empowered thousands of consumers with educational presentations and workshops, and through multiple media outlets, including our own podcast, The Consumer Toolbox. The MOCI firmly stands by its motto, "Education is the Best Prevention, **and you should too!**"

This special edition of our newsletter is in celebration of **National Consumer Protection Week (NCPW)** (March 3 – 9, 2024), an annual event dedicated to educate and help people understand their consumer rights and avoid frauds and scams. In the current digital age, consumers are much easier to fall prey to online scams, fraud and identity theft, just to name a few. For this reason alone, it is paramount that consumers take the time to learn of ways to better protect and safeguard their personal and financial information. **Join us at one of our local events (see below).**

FACT: In 2023, nearly \$400,000 was recovered for consumers as a result of MOCI's consumer advocacy efforts. This is a reflection of our commitment for the work we do for you!

If you are a consumer in need assistance in resolving a complaint against a business, or if your organization would like to request a presentation or informational tabling, please contact us at (413) 787-6437. To file a complaint and to learn about your consumer rights, visit Mass.Gov.

OUR LOCAL NCPW TABLINGS AND PRESENTATION EVENTS

March - 9am to 1pm: Springfield City Hall Atrium

March 6 - 8:30am to 1pm: Roderick Ireland Courthouse, 50 State St., Spfld. and 8:30am to 1pm Western Division Housing Court, 37 Elm St., Spfld.

March 6 – 12pm to 2:30pm: WNEU University Commons Bldg.

March 7 - 2pm to 3:30pm: West Springfield Library

March 8 - 12pm to 1:30pm: Pleasant View Senior Ctr. - scam presentation



Massachusetts is a Serious Target to Identity Theft, Scams & Fraud

The FTC Sentinel Network Data Book clearly depicts the financial impact it had on Massachusetts consumers in 2023. *Do you want to know the facts?*

The total financial losses resulting from identity theft and fraud was \$142.3 million, with 2% of those related to health care fraud.

Identity Theft: #6 of 50 states

- 28% (from credit card theft)
- 25% were government-based documents or benefits
- 24,540 complaints filed

Fraud: #28 of 50 states

- 17% were imposter scams
- 62,481 reports filed
- 5% were from online shopping

More information on back page

Source:

<https://www.ftc.gov/reports/consumer-sentinel-network-data-book-2023>

SCAMS, SCAMS & MORE SCAMS

Impact of Financial Losses

According to the 2023 FTC's Consumer Sentinel Network Data Book, a new benchmark of \$10 billion fraud reports were filed nationwide, a 14% increase from 2022. A total of \$4.6 Billion (21% increase from 2022) resulted from investment scams, and \$2.7 billion from imposter scams.

As technology continues to evolve, imposters, scammers, criminals, impersonators, etc. are using it to their advantage.

Their original method of targeting victims was formerly via the telephone, to then text messaging, and now their using emails. With that, email scams accounted for 24% of reports last year.

The victims reported unauthorized bank transfers and transactions. Cryptocurrency was also high with \$1.41 billion losses to consumers.

Who Fell Victim?

- 44% were between the ages of 20-29
- 25% were 70-79
- 22% were of 80 years old and older

Sadly, 93,000 fraud complaints were filed by military consumers who suffered over \$178 million in losses in 2023. There was also an 82% increase from the 24,540 reports filed for fraudulent government-based benefits.

Read the full Sentinel report for more details.



Below you will see the steadfast growth of fraud cases reported to the Federal Trade Commission since 2001

Year	# of Reports
2001	325,519
2002	551,622
2003	713,657
2004	860,383
2005	909,314
2006	906,129
2007	1,070,447
2008	1,261,124
2009	1,428,977
2010	1,470,306
2011	1,898,543
2012	2,115,079
2013	2,134,565
2014	2,620,931
2015	3,080,378
2016	3,060,824
2017	2,926,167
2018	3,161,213
2019	3,485,938
2020	5,156,880
2021	6,122,341
2022	5,300,157
2023	5,392,028

IMPORTANT REFERRALS & LINKS:

*Massachusetts Attorney General's Office
Consumer Hotline: (617) 727-8400
www.mass.gov/orgs/office-of-the-attorney-general*

- Federal Trade Commission: FTC.gov
- Internet Crime Bureau: ic3.gov
- To report Identity Theft: identitytheft.gov
- Request free credit reports: annualcreditreport.com