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PRESS RELEASE

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District Attorney Michael E. McMahon and City Council Minority Leader Steven Matteo Announce Staten Island “Slam the Scam” Initiative, Launch Boroughwide Campaign to Combat Scams, Prevent Fraud, and Raise Public Awareness

*** “Slam the Scam” encourages Staten Islanders to just hang up on telephone and other scams; delivers new educational and law enforcement resources, including RCDA’s dedicated SCAM hotline, web portal, and digital tip form, to combat and protect residents from scams***

Staten Island, N.Y. — Today, Richmond County District Attorney Michael E. McMahon and City Council Minority Leader Steven Matteo announced the Staten Island ‘Slam the Scam’ Initiative, a boroughwide campaign to combat the recent spike in scams and fraud by raising public awareness about how Staten Islanders can best protect themselves from losing money and other valuables to scams. This joint initiative will deliver new educational and law enforcement resources for the borough, including a hotline number, web portal, and digital tip form for the public to report scams to law enforcement, with the option of remaining anonymous. RCDA and Council Member Matteo’s office will also conduct outreach to raise awareness through digital media and mail to warn Staten Islanders of these scams.

On Thursday, the offices of DA McMahon and Council Member Matteo will hold a virtual town hall meeting to address this growing issue and discuss a range of scams targeting residents across the Island, while offering advice on how to avoid becoming a victim.

Staten Islanders who want to report a scam or fraud can now do so either through RCDA's dedicated SCAM hotline at (718) 556-7226(SCAM), by sending an email to reportscams@rcda.nyc.gov, or by filling out a **scams tip form** on the **RCDA website scams page**. Additionally, RCDA has launched a web portal that will give updated information about new scams and provide educational resources for Staten Islanders to learn how to avoid scams and fraud.

"There has been an unfathomable increase in the number of complaints we've received of Staten Islanders falling victim to scams of all types, often resulting in the loss of great sums of money and in some cases entire life savings," said **District Attorney Michael E. McMahon**. "To combat this growing problem, we are calling on Staten Islanders to join us to 'Slam the Scam' and just hang up! We encourage all Staten Islanders to utilize these new resources to protect themselves from would-be predators and help stop the widespread onslaught of scams. While my office and the NYPD remain committed to holding scammers accountable when an arrest is made, stopping scams before they happen is key to our success. To be sure, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure and I am proud to join Council Member Matteo in this anti-scam initiative."

City Council Minority Leader Steven Matteo said, "We have heard far too many heartbreaking stories of people losing so much to these criminals. Scam artists see an opportunity to take advantage of people when they feel most vulnerable, and unfortunately that is how many people feel during this pandemic and economic crisis," said Minority Leader Matteo. "But we want to assure Staten Islanders that they are not alone, that we can provide them with the information, resources and support they need to protect themselves. You do not have to be a victim. We can help you fight back."

In first three months of 2021, scammers took Staten Island residents for hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash and valuables through a variety of deceptive means. Some common scams include but are not limited to Deception Burglary Scams, Police Officer, Law Enforcement, and Social Security Scams, Craigslist/Facebook Scams, Romance Scams, and Family Emergency Scams. Some examples of recent scams in the Staten Island community include:

- A victim (F/60s) met someone on an online dating website and sent personal photos. The individual then started to blackmail the victim, giving \$20,000.00 between gift cards/transfers. **RCDA was able to intercept \$10,000.00 of that money and return it to the victim.**
- A victim (F/70s) received a call stating that her grandson was arrested and needed bail money. Approximately \$9,000.00 was sent.
- A victim (F/20s) had a malware problem on computer and called a number for Apple Support that was found on Google. Victim was told to download an app giving "Apple" access to the phone. Individual also had victim purchase eight target gift cards in the amount of \$500 (\$4000 total).
- Victim (F/50s) sent \$498.85 to someone who identified themselves as a Con-Edison employee or else electricity would be turned off. Individual stated they did not receive the payment and had the victim sent another two payments. Total money lost \$2,002.50.

This recent spike in scams has prompted DA McMahon and Council Member Matteo to take action and launch the Slam the Scam initiative, encouraging Staten Islanders to just hang up on scams, and, when possible, report it to law enforcement to help investigators track and prevent new scams. DA McMahon and Council Member Matteo also urged Staten Islanders to be very cautious of scams and offered these tips to help keep Staten Islanders safe:

Watch your four P's, it Could be Scam:

1. Pretend

- Scammers often pose as an official contacting you on behalf of the government. They might use a real name, like the Social Security Administration, IRS, Medicare, or a made-up name that sounds official.

2. Problem or Prize

- Scammers may say you're in trouble with the government, you owe money, someone in your family had an emergency, or that there is a virus on your computer. Others will lie and say you won money but have to pay a fee to get it.

3. Pressure

- Scammers want you to act before you have time to think about it. If you're on the phone, they will tell you not to hang up so you can't check out their story.

4. Pay

- They often insist that you pay by sending money through a money transfer company, or by purchasing on a gift card and giving them the number on the back. Some will send you a fake check and tell you to deposit it and then send them money.

Additionally,

- Hang up on suspicious calls from “government officials” calling about a problem.
- NEVER make payments with gift cards, wire transfers, or by mailing cash.
- Report scams to RCDA’s dedicated scams hotline at **(718) 556-7226(SCAM)**, by sending an email to **reportscams@rcda.nyc.gov**, or by filling out a **scams tip form** on the **RCDA website**.

More resources can be found on the RCDA [website](#).

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