

Dear Chairwoman Baginski and members of the House Innovation, Internet, and Technology Committee;

I am writing to you in support of House Bill 5121, that will regulate the practices and procedures of virtual currency kiosk operators to prevent fraud and protect all residents of Rhode Island, especially older adults. Criminals rely on these cryptocurrency ATMs because the transaction is fast, easy and often untraceable. I myself have been targeted by a scammer, trying to get me to pay off a fictitious overdue "bill," to avoid court. I was instructed to go to a cryptocurrency ATM and "pay," immediately. As you can well guess; the money would have gone directly into the scammer's wallet, and I would have had no recourse to get my money back due to the transaction being untraceable.

While I have tried to educate myself with various scammer techniques; not everyone is as aware of potential scams. And with the advent of AI, scammers are in an even better position to bilk people out of their hard-earned money by replicating the voice of a loved one in distress, playing on the emotions of an older person who may not be technically savvy. And with no limits on the amount of money in these transactions; someone could very easily drain their bank account trying to solve whatever tragic situation the scammer has presented. Plus, what is to keep other criminals from watching older people entering convenience stores to utilize the crypto ATM? Knowing about the proliferation of Cryptocurrency scams, other criminals may simply watch the Cryptocurrency ATM for easy burglary targets, older adults being less able to defend themselves.

Several states have enacted such regulations, and at least 30 other states are currently considering similar legislation to protect their residents. And with 65% of the people targeted being 60-plus years of age; we need you to step forward and protect Rhode Islanders from criminals using crypto ATMs to carry out their schemes.