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State Agency Reminds Senior Citizens of Anti-Fraud Hotline

Raises consumer awareness during Older Americans Month in May

RICHMOND – In recognition of May as national "Older Americans Month," the Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR) reminds consumers of its **Hotline for Older Virginians**.

As the state agency responsible for regulating certain commercial jobs which pose a potential for public harm, DPOR works to prevent elder fraud and discrimination. Senior citizens are often potential targets for unscrupulous business practices. And seniors are sometimes reluctant to report fraud victimization out of embarrassment, or even fear that they will lose their independence or control of financial decision-making.

DPOR offers a dedicated **Hotline – (804) 367-2178 –** as a resource for older Virginians and their families. In addition, **on-line Consumer Guides** provide advice on avoiding elder fraud in five areas under the agency's purview:

Construction and Home Improvement Scams
Older Virginians are particularly vulnerable to construction scams because so many own their own homes but cannot do their own repairs.

Fair Housing
Virginia law prohibits discrimination on the basis of "elderliness," which is defined as age 55 and older for purposes of fair housing.

Buying a Hearing Aid
More than 22 million Americans of all ages experience hearing impairments, seven million of whom are over age 69.

Cemeteries and Pre-Need Burial Contracts

In times of loss and grief, consumers of all ages – not only older Virginians – can be more vulnerable to fraud.

Buying Eyeglasses and Choosing an Optician
Nearly 160 million Americans of all ages wear eyeglasses or contact lenses to correct their vision. Of persons aged 55 and older, more than two-thirds wear corrective eyewear.

During Older Americans Month – and throughout the year – Virginians can learn more about protecting themselves, their aging parents, relatives, and friends by calling the DPOR Hotline at 804-367-2178 or visiting http://www.dpor.state.va.us.

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About DPOR
The Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR) administers and enforces laws regulating 31 commercial occupations and certain professions. The agency licenses or certifies more than 250,000 individuals and businesses ranging from architects and contractors to cosmetologists and professional wrestlers.

DPOR investigates reports of regulatory violations by licensees; pursues complaints of criminal activity by unlicensed practitioners; responds to consumer inquiries and requests for license checks; administers recovery funds for consumers harmed in contractor or real estate transactions; and conducts mediation services and public awareness campaigns.

For more information, visit DPOR online at http://www.dpor.state.va.us.