

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CONTACT: Adrian LaRochelle
Staff Attorney
(603) 271-1463**

N.H. SECURITIES BUREAU WARNS OF ROMANCE SCAMS

CONCORD, NH (June 15, 2018) – The New Hampshire Bureau of Securities Regulation is warning New Hampshire residents of romance scammers, con artists who create believable profiles, entice people into online relationships, establish a level of trust, and scam their victims by exploiting the relationship for money. Online romance scams have become increasingly pervasive because the scammers can easily use the anonymity of the internet to mask their deceptive personas.

Most often, these scams begin with some kind of invitation to chat using a social media or dating platform. The scammers create fake profiles and, to be especially convincing, will use a picture that is not their own and fabricate an identity including work, educational, and personal histories. What they have managed to do is invent a fake life for a fake identity. Eventually, these scammers will try to communicate by e-mail or text message and will seek money for real-sounding investments, business ventures, or personal financial hardships.

The N.H. Bureau of Securities Regulation has the following tips for people to consider in order to help them avoid becoming a victim of a romance scam:

- **Do not send, wire, or deposit money.** Be very suspicious if you are asked for money by someone you have only met online.
- **Research the person's photo and profile** using online searches to see if the material has been used elsewhere. Use a Google image search to check if their profile picture is genuine.
- **Go slow and ask questions.** Often, romance scammers will claim love or want a serious online relationship, too quickly.

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- **Research any companies, business ventures, or ideas** that the person wants you to invest in.
- **Beware if the individual seems too perfect** or quickly asks to leave a dating service or social media site to go “offline.”
- **Beware if the individual attempts to isolate you** from friends and family.
- **Beware if the individual promises to meet in person, but then always comes up with an excuse why he or she can’t.** If you haven’t met the person after a few months, for whatever reason, you have good reason to be suspicious. Romance scammers may plan a visit, but will later claim they are prevented from travelling for some reason, although this is likely a lie.
- **Beware if the individual impersonates a U.S. service member.** Scammers will likely claim they are serving overseas or have been honorably discharged. Be suspicious if he or she is unable to talk on the phone, via webcam, or cannot send at least one email using an email address that ends in “.mil”. For more information about scams involving a possible U.S. service member, go to:
<http://www.cid.army.mil/romancescam.html>
- **Beware if you notice inconsistencies** such as different phone numbers, email addresses, or online profiles. A romance scammer may also change his or her story or history frequently.

New Hampshire residents who believe they have been victimized should contact the N.H. Bureau of Securities Regulation by calling its toll free hotline at **800-994-4200 (or 603-271-1463)** or emailing at **securities@sos.nh.gov**.

Victims can also report a romance scammer to the State of New Hampshire Office of the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Bureau by calling **888-468-4454** or emailing at **DOJ-CPB@doj.nh.gov**. Complaints to the Consumer Protection Bureau can be filed online at: **<https://www.doj.nh.gov/consumer/complaints/index.htm>**