



Member, Board of Supervisors
District 6

City and County of San Francisco

JANE KIM

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Press Release

**Supervisor Kim Shares Community's Need for Blessing Scam Task Force,
Community Liaison for Chinese Community & Asian Advisory Council**

San Francisco – The crime known as the Chinese “blessing scam,” is an ages-old scam that continues to target vulnerable seniors, especially women, in the Chinese community both here and in other cities such as New York City with its high number of Chinese residents.

The “blessing scam” involves an organized group of individuals who prey on the superstitions and desire of their victims to protect their loved ones from curses by providing valuables such as cash and jewelry to the perpetrators to “bless.” After the victim returns home, she realizes too late that her property—many times a life’s hard-earned savings—is gone.

More than \$500,000 in New York and over \$100,000 in cash and valuables in San Francisco were stolen in 2014 and more recently reports of another victim in 2016 who was robbed of \$40,000 in cash and valuables. In 2012 in San Francisco, there were 47 cases and 10 people charged with the crime in San Francisco with more cases following to date.

Supervisor Jane Kim explained that, “The community needs the police and the district attorney’s office to work as a team and we believe a task force focused on these crimes will help ensure that these con artists who prey on our seniors are prevented from continuing to target our seniors,” and added that “A dedicated Chinese-speaking community liaison to the Chinese community and re-initiating an Asian Advisory Council with community members who have their ears to the ground, neighborhood business owners, and banks to flag suspicious activity would all be huge steps in supporting our Chinese community.”

“These crimes have been devastating for far too many unsuspecting elderly Chinese victims,” said District Attorney George Gascón. “It’s important that police and prosecutors reflect the communities that they are responsible for keeping safe. By enhancing communication between the community and law enforcement, we can more effectively prevent Blessing Scams.”

“These Blessing Scams target older Cantonese females and many victims lost their life savings to scammers who preyed on the elderly. We must stop them for hurting our seniors and our community,” said Anni Chung, Executive Director of Self-Help for the Elderly, a community-serving organization with locations throughout the City.



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“Preventing these crimes from happening in the first place is a high priority and the best way to do that is in the language of the community that you’re trying to serve. The DA has engaged in a Chinese-language education and outreach effort that has made a difference – from training bank employees to spot the red flags indicating that a financial crime may be happening right under their noses, to reminding people around Lunar New Year that this is a high-risk time for these blessing scams to take place. But victims have to be able to speak to someone in their own language for the police and the prosecutors to be able to properly investigate. Communication is key,” affirmed Police Commissioner Victor Hwang.

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