

Partnerships Within New England and Beyond:

2025 Berkshire County (MA) Organized Retail and Financial Crimes Workshop

By Adam Berg, Criminal Intelligence Research Specialist, NESPIN

The Berkshire District Attorney's Office of Massachusetts recently hosted the 2025 Berkshire County Organized Retail and Financial Crimes Workshop. Over two hundred people from both the criminal justice community and private sector represented their agencies and professional organizations from the New England states, as well as New York, to combat organized retail and financial crimes within the region. The workshop began with Massachusetts-specific case success with regard to state legislation and ended with a national overview of these crime types and the legislation proposed at the national level to continue to keep up with modern-day threats.

James Hall, Organized Retail Crime and Financial Fraud Specialist for Berkshire District Attorney's Office, kicked off the event by introducing the first speaker, **Berkshire District Attorney Timothy Shugrue**, who stands committed to protecting the businesses and financial institutions within the region. Massachusetts is subject to over one billion dollars in loss annually due to organized retail theft.¹



Berkshire District Attorney Timothy Shugrue

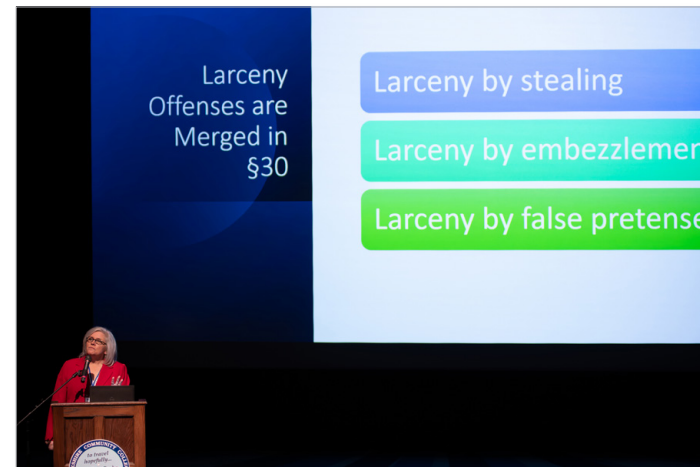
The New England State Police Information Network (NESPIN) staff provided a brief overview of tools and resources available to criminal justice partners to combat these threats through investigative support, partnerships, and information sharing.

Kelly Kemp, the Second Assistant for the Berkshire District Attorney's Office, presented how Western Massachusetts is prosecuting current organized retail and financial crimes.

Ryan Kearney, General Counsel for the Retailers Association of Massachusetts, briefed two proposed legislative bills that are forward in Massachusetts. The first piece of legislation is Massachusetts House Bill H1611, titled "An Act Relative to Gift Card Fraud," to establish penalties for certain crimes involving gift cards.ⁱⁱ The second piece of legislation is Massachusetts Senate Bill S.1209, titled "An Act Relative to Gift Card Tampering," which is aimed to amend existing laws to establish clear penalties for tampering with, stealing, or fraudulently altering gift cards.ⁱⁱⁱ



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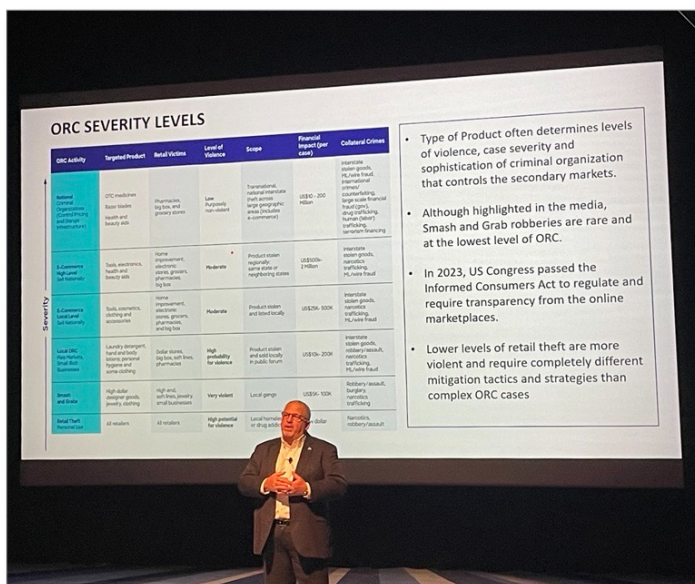
Ryan Kearney, General Counsel for Retailers Association of Massachusetts (RAM)

Dave Johnston, National Retail Federation (NRF) Vice President for Asset Protection & Retail Operations, provided a national overview of federal legislation efforts. “NRF strongly supports the Combating Organized Retail Crime Act of 2025, which would establish a new Organized Retail and Supply Chain Crime Coordination Center. The Center would align efforts, expertise, and resources across local, state, federal and private-sector partners, enabling better information-sharing and more coordinated investigations and prosecutions.” iv

Ben Dugan, Executive Director, Central Investigations for CVS Health and President for The Coalition of Law Enforcement and Retail (CLEAR), provided a big picture threat assessment of the severity of organized retail crime groups. Examples in this threat assessment ranged from local smash and grab groups, which target high value items such as jewelry or clothing and cost between \$5,000 to \$100,000 per case, to national criminal organizations that control pricing and disrupt infrastructure. These

groups are typically not violent and target over-the-counter medicine, razor blades, and health and beauty products. The case impact for these groups is between \$10 million to \$200 million per case. The annual CLEAR Conference can be a resource for agencies looking for more information on supply chain disruptions and will be held October 20-23, 2025, in Orlando, FL. <https://www.clearusa.org/>

The event concluded with **Mark Solomon, President of the International Association of Financial Crimes Investigators (IAFCI)**, who addressed the challenges of financial institutions combatting modern day technology such as deep fake videos, and provided countermeasures to help detect the fraud. The 2025 IAFCI International Training Conference & Exhibitor Show can be a resource for agencies looking to keep pace with the modern-day threats pertaining to financial crimes. The conference will be held August 25-29, 2025, in Oklahoma City, OK. <https://www.iafci.org/>



L-R: James Hall, Timothy Shugrue, Ryan Kearney, Ben Dugan



Berkshire County District Attorney Timothy Shugrue and Second Assistant District Attorney Kelly Kemp

Ben Dugan, Executive Director, Central Investigations at CVS Health, and President, Coalition of Law Enforcement and Retail (CLEAR)

The Berkshire District Attorney's Office partnered with the New England State Police Information Network (NESPIN), the Middle Atlantic Great Lakes Organized Crime Law Enforcement Network (MAGLOCLN), the New England Organized Retail Crime Alliance (NEORCA), the Coalition of Law Enforcement and Retail (CLEAR), and the International Association of Financial Crimes Investigators (IAFCI).

This event was also made possible by sponsorship from the Pittsfield Cooperative Bank, Guido's Fresh Marketplace, Samel's Deli and Catering, Ahold Delhaize (Stop and Shop/Hannaford's) and the Berkshire County Sheriffs' Charitable Foundation, Inc.



References:

Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA), "The Impact of Organized Retail Crime and Product Theft in the United States," <https://www.rila.org/foc-us-areas/public-policy/study-retail-theft-balloons-to-over-68-billion> (Accessed April 21, 2025)

Bill Track 50, "MA H161," <https://www.billtrack50.com/billdetail/1863094> (Accessed April 21, 2025)

The 194th General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, "Bill S.1209," <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/S1209> (Accessed April 21, 2025)

National Retail Federation (NRF), "NRF advocates to stop ORC," <https://nrf.com/advocacy/policy-issues/organized-retail-crime> (Accessed April 21, 2025)

Footnotes:

ⁱ <https://www.rila.org/focus-areas/public-policy/study-retail-theft-balloons-to-over-68-billion>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.billtrack50.com/billdetail/1863094>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/S1209>

^{iv} <https://nrf.com/advocacy/policy-issues/organized-retail-crime>

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