

United States Senate

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6400

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May 22, 2019

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

We write to support your proposal to authorize carriers to block unwanted robocalls by default, and to encourage you to consider further actions within the Commission's authority to halt the scourge of illegal robocalls.

Combatting illegal robocalls has long been a focus of the Senate Aging Committee, which we lead. Over the past six years, the Committee has held 22 hearings to examine scams targeting older Americans. Scams we have highlighted include the IRS imposter scam, the Jamaican Lottery scam, computer tech support scams, grandparent scams, elder financial exploitation, identity theft, and the notorious "Drug Mule" scam.

Typically, these scams are initiated by robocallers who use caller-ID "spoofing" to perpetrate their schemes. When the Do-Not-Call Registry was created in 2003, telecommunications equipment could not easily be used to "spoof" a caller ID. Unfortunately, the emergence of Voice Over-Internet Protocol technology – or "VoIP"— in recent years has changed all this. Now, criminals can use VoIP to hide their identity while generating millions of robocalls from anywhere in the world at practically no cost.

This problem is getting worse. Last year, the FTC logged an incredible 3.8 billion robocall complaints, and this year industry sources estimate that nearly half of all mobile calls will be fraudulent. The American people are tired of having scammers ring their phones off the hook, and they want these calls stopped.

For this reason, we believe consumers will welcome the Commission's proposal to allow carriers to block these illegal robocalls by default, and we are hopeful that it will be adopted at the June 6th meeting. We also welcome the Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking creating a "safe harbor" for carriers to block calls that are not authenticated under the SHAKEN/STIR framework, and we look forward to progress on this proposal as well.

That said, experience shows that scammers are ruthless and clever at targeting their victims, and will likely continue their efforts to find even more ways to skirt the rules. For years, our

Committee has stressed the need for regulators and the business community to work together more aggressively to stop scammers from using VoIP and other technologies to facilitate fraud. We note that the Commission's Enforcement Bureau has asked U.S.-based VoIP providers to work with other carriers to trace illegal robocalls back to their source, and about the steps they are taking to identify and stem the flow of robocalls originating via their networks. We believe that expanded efforts to engage all VoIP providers to stop robocalls at their source holds great promise and are an excellent complement to the proposals the Commission will consider at its June 6th meeting.

Again, we welcome the proposals you have recently announced, and we encourage you to consider further actions within the Commission's authority to halt illegal robocalls and protect our nation's seniors.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
Chairman



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
Ranking Member

cc: Commissioner Michael O'Rielly
Commissioner Brendan Carr
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
Commissioner Geoffrey Starks