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United States Senate

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6400

(202) 224-5364

March 22, 2017

The Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Commissioners:

We write to express our strong support for the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) and Notice of Inquiry (NOI) announced by Chairman Pai on March 2, 2017, to permit telecommunications providers to block spoofed robocalls. We urge the full Commission to adopt the NPRM and NOI.

The Senate Special Committee on Aging, of which we serve as Chairman and Ranking Member, has long been concerned about the use of robocalls by scammers to disrupt, annoy, and harass all Americans — especially seniors. According to the Government Accountability Office, seniors lose an estimated \$2.9 billion a year to financial exploitation through a variety of schemes, including phone scams. Unfortunately, in recent years, advances in technology have made it easier and cheaper for unscrupulous actors to place a virtually limitless number of robocalls, thus increasing the probability of reaching potential victims. According to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Americans receive 2.4 billion robocalls each month.

In our Committee hearing titled *Ringing off the Hook: Examining the Proliferation of Unwanted Calls*, Professor Henning Schulzrinne, a former FCC Chief Technology Officer, explained how new technology makes it simple for robocallers to disguise or “spoof” a caller ID. This technology has made it possible for scammers to fool their victims by making it appear as if they are calling from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) or even from a local sheriff’s department. As Professor Schulzrinne explained, however, it is possible to fight technology with technology, and the technology exists *now* for carriers to offer robocall filters that have been proven effective in combatting robocalls.

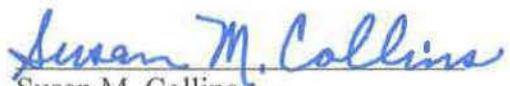
Previously, the primary impediment to carriers deploying robocall filters had been the concern that these filters violate the Commission’s call completion requirements. In a 2015 ruling, which we supported, the Commission made clear that voice service providers can offer call blocking tools to customers without violating these rules. Despite this positive step, however, the Commissioners said at the time that more needed to be done about caller ID spoofing. Now, almost two years later, the Commission must once again act to help protect our nation’s most vulnerable population.

In another recent Aging Committee hearing, Tim Camus, Deputy Inspector General of the U.S. Treasury Department’s Office of Inspector General of Tax Administration (TIGTA), described a successful pilot program undertaken by TIGTA, the Department of Homeland

Security, and Verizon to block almost two million calls that had been spoofed to appear as though they had originated from the IRS. This pilot project undoubtedly prevented many thousands of American seniors from falling victim to the notorious IRS Impersonation Scam, which has cost more than 10,200 Americans approximately \$54.9 million since October 2013. Further, it demonstrates the positive impact allowing carriers to block spoofed calls could have on the lives of Americans, especially seniors.

Again, we urge the full Commission to adopt the proposed NPRM and NOI, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to protect Americans from the scourge of unwanted spoofed calls.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
Chairman



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
Ranking Member