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CHAIRMAN FRANK PALLONE, JR. | 116TH CONGRESS

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Pallone Remarks at Markup of Stopping Bad Robocalls Act

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks today at a Communications and Technology Subcommittee Markup of H.R. 3375, the Stopping Bad Robocalls Act:*

Today, we are here to address a major concern of consumers – those annoying and illegal robocalls. The rising tide of illegal robocalls was once a nuisance, but it has grown to threaten the way consumers view and use their telephones. If we don't get a handle on them, I am fearful robocalls will undermine our entire phone system.

The American people are understandably fed up with robocalls. And who can blame them. One of my district's area codes received more than 20 million robocalls in May alone, according to YouMail. That's a little over seven calls per second. That's outrageous. Some studies even estimate that nearly half of all calls this year will be scam calls.

It's no wonder that people are refusing to answer calls from numbers they don't recognize. But each time a consumer chooses not to pick up the phone out of fear that a scam robocall is on the other end of the line, it chips away at our community and public safety.

This problem is not only harmful to consumers, it also deeply affects many of our institutions. For example, at our legislative hearing, we learned that the Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, Florida received 6,600 scam calls in just one month, specifically designed to appear as calls coming from within the hospital.

We've also heard similar stories of scammers disguised as the IRS, looking to collect a debt, local governments or police departments, or loved ones, in trouble, looking for help. We're even hearing about new scams like the one-ring-scam, where fraudsters try to trick consumers into calling back international numbers in the hopes that the consumers will rack up charges.

All of these scams are different, and there won't be a silver bullet to fix them all. But, that's why I'm pleased that so many members of the Committee have drafted bipartisan legislation to help fix this problem.

I'm also pleased that I was able to join with Ranking Member Walden on the Stopping Bad Robocalls Act. This new bill represents a bipartisan agreement on comprehensive legislation to tackle both illegal and unwanted robocalls.

Our bipartisan bill will implement a nationwide caller authentication system, free for consumers, so they can again trust that the number they see on their caller ID is actually the person calling them. It will also give consumers more help in controlling the unwanted calls they consistently receive.

Consumers will also be able to block illegal and unwanted calls in a consistent and transparent way, so that the calls people want are getting through.

And our bill also gives law enforcement and the Federal Communications Commission the tools, information, and incentives to go after robocallers that break the law.

These are common-sense and meaningful solutions that will put consumers back in control of their phones, and I thank Ranking Members Walden and Latta, and Chairman Doyle for their work on this bipartisan bill.

We will consider four bipartisan amendments that are based on bills that were introduced this year by other members.

Representatives Clarke, Bilirakis, Van Drew, Fox, Rouda and Walberg have worked together to introduce the Ending One-Ring Scams Act.

Representatives McEachin and Olso, Kim, Brooks, and Kustoff have introduced the Locking Up Illegal Robocallers Act.

Representatives Butterfield, Johnson, Soto, and Gianforte have introduced the Tracing Back and Catching Unlawful Robocallers Act.

And Representatives Crist and Soto have been working together on legislation to create a spam calls task force to make sure hardworking civil servants across the government have their eyes trained on the robocall problem.

Lastly, I want to thank Ms. Eshoo for raising awareness of the important consumer protection issues cited in her HANGUP Act, and I would like to thank Ms. Speier, not a member of our committee, but she's also been working to address robocalls issues.

I want to thank the members and staff on both sides of the aisle for working together to produce legislation that is going to make a real difference for consumers.

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