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Testimony on HB 2620
NEUTRAL
House Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications Committee

Tuesday, February 18, 2020

Chairman Seiwert and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of AT&T, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to share information about our ongoing work to protect consumers from the scourge of unwanted robocalls. We are proud to develop solutions alongside federal and state officials, and industry partners, as part of our commitment to stopping fraudsters from abusing communications technologies.

In recent years, fraudsters have become increasingly sophisticated and persistent in their effort to reach consumers with suspect or unwanted calls. Since 2016, AT&T has taken more aggressive steps to identify and combat the rising volume of unwanted traffic directed at consumers – without impacting the quality of legitimate traffic that traverses our network. To date, we have blocked over 5.7 billion calls from being delivered to consumers and continue to prevent as many as 12 million robocalls per weekday on our network.

This is a serious issue that requires comprehensive strategy to improve safety and security across the communications ecosystem. To that end, AT&T has deployed network-based call blocking capabilities and provided consumers with low- and no-cost technology tools across our platforms to guard themselves from cybercrime and various types of fraud, including robocalls. What's more, we provide security tips, alerts, and other educational resources to aid in their protection.

We are also encouraged by the legislative progress at the federal level – most notably, the passage of the TRACED Act – that requires service providers to deploy caller ID authentication technology in their networks, improves enforceability, and expands consumer protections. As we work to meet the important statutory deadlines set forward in the Act and coordinate our participation in regulatory proceedings with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), we ask that states support these ongoing efforts rather than pass separate legislation that may have the unintended consequence of delaying more widespread progress to combat spoofing and other forms of call fraud.

We fully support the spirit and intent of HB 2620, but believe that the best path forward for consumers would be to give this brand-new federal statute the opportunity to be fully implemented before examining how legislation might be able to support existing consumer protection and anti-robocall efforts. In the meantime, state and local government can help advance our shared goal of protecting consumers from new and existing fraud schemes by enhancing law enforcement resources.

I am enclosing additional resources that detail our commitment to combatting call fraud. These actions are consistent with our demonstrated history as an industry leader to work with government and industry bodies to empower and protect consumers. Your continued attention and leadership on this issue is vital to ensuring that consumers are protected, and that business and industry can thrive in Kansas and across the country.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Molly Kocour Boyle
President – AT&T Kansas

AT&T's Fight to End Robocalls

We work daily to stop illegal calls from reaching consumers.
AT&T launched a program in late 2016 to identify and block suspected illegal traffic on its network that—after thorough analysis and investigation—AT&T's global fraud team reasonably determines are illegal.

→ We have blocked as many as 12 million robocalls per weekday[1] on our network.

→

We have blocked 5.7 billion illegal calls from being delivered to consumers.

AT&T offers a variety of tools to consumers to combat illegal and unwanted calls.
We offer multiple call blocking options across our platforms, including:

→ **AT&T Call Protect.** This free service blocks potential fraud calls and labels calls from telephone numbers identified as suspicious, or from potentially unwanted sources (categories such as telemarketer, spam risk alert, and others). Available for post-paid, mobile wireless customers with AT&T HD voice-enabled iOS or Android smartphones. Spam Risk Alerts require an AT&T HD Voice coverage area.

→ **AT&T Call Protect Plus.** Includes everything above and provides additional features including Caller ID and Reverse Number Lookup for $3.99/month. Users also have the option to select entire categories of calls (e.g., political or survey calls) to block, send to voicemail, or always allow using Custom Call Controls.

→ AT&T has blocked or labeled more than 600 million fraud calls, and more than 1.4 billion spam calls, through the AT&T Call Protect services.

→ **Digital Phone Call Protect.** Free for customers of AT&T Phone, AT&T's consumer VoIP service, this service blocks calls from known scammers and sends customers a caller ID alert if a call is suspected spam. AT&T **has blocked more than 13.3 million incoming calls and labeled more than 15.6 million calls** for Digital Phone Call Protect subscribers.[2]

→ **AT&T Smart Call Blocker Phones.** The phone works with any landline voice service (including legacy switched voice service) and on all wireline networks (not just AT&T's), for any consumer with caller ID. It screens incoming calls from telephone numbers not included on the consumer's list of trusted telephone numbers. AT&T Smart Call Blocker are available for purchase and manufactured by Vtech.

We educate the public about potential threats and empower them with tools and resources.
Security tips to protect consumers from fraud and guard against identity theft are available on various websites. For example, AT&T's Cyber Aware Resources website – *att.com/cyberaware* – includes alerts on recently identified scams and provides links to other important consumer resources, as well as instructions for reporting various types of fraud (including telephone call fraud). AT&T pushes this

> We have blocked as many as *12 million* robocalls per weekday on our network.
>
> We have blocked more than *5.7 billion* illegal calls from being delivered to consumers.

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1 http://about.att.com/story/more_than_one_billion_robocalls_blocked.html
2 As of March 2019

educational content through social media and digital advertising. AT&T also issues consumer alerts when fraud events are identified.

We lead and collaborate within the communications ecosystem to stop robocalls.

→ We chaired the FCC's 2016 Robocall Task Force, and continue to work with industry partners, consumer advocates and law enforcement to address the problem of unwanted robocalls. Our engineers and experts have long served in key leadership roles in industry organizations and standards setting bodies engaged in the front lines on the robocall issue.

→ **SHAKEN/STIR.** AT&T played a leading role in the development of the technical protocols known as Signature-based Handling of Asserted Information Using toKENs and the Secure Telephone Identity Revisited ("SHAKEN/STIR"). This Caller ID authentication technology is designed to let consumers know when a call is being spoofed. AT&T is continuing to lead industry's implementation efforts. AT&T chairs the board established to oversee SHAKEN/STIR implementation and ongoing operations. AT&T was among the first in the industry to sign calls and exchange-authenticated traffic with other providers.

→ **Industry Traceback Process.** AT&T also is proud to have worked collaboratively with industry partners to develop and implement the industry traceback process, which maps a call's path through multiple networks to identify the call originator. Traceback has been an important investigative tool for law enforcement, giving investigators information they need to identify and shut down illegal robocall and scam operations, including operations located overseas.

The Pallone-Thune TRACED Act, enacted December 30, 2019, strengthens consumer protections and enforcement measures to help combat illegal and unwanted calls.

This legislation adds a number of additional tools to regulators' toolboxes and enhances the ongoing efforts by industry, regulators, and law enforcement to combat illegal and unwanted robocalls.

These tools include: mandating implementation of Caller ID authentication requirements such as SHAKEN/STIR by all providers, strengthening the enforcement process and associated penalties, and expanding consumer protections against illegal and unwanted robocalls.

Robocall Consumer Tools and Information

Below are some of the great tools and information available to help consumers combat the issue of robocalling.

- **AT&T's consumer education website** with information on fraud protection and cybersecurity available at:
  → **http://about.att.com/sites/cybersecurity**

- **AT&T Call Protect for Mobility** (for eligible smartphones in HD Voice) blocks illegal robocalls and labels other calls (e.g., Telemarketing). This gives consumers more information to decide whether to answer the call. More information available at:
  → **https://www.att.com/features/security-apps.html**

- **AT&T Digital Call Protect** (for IP wireline phones) blocks illegal robocalls and labels other calls (e.g., Telemarketing). This gives consumers more information to decide whether to answer the call. More information available at:
  → **https://www.att.com/esupport/article.html#!/my-account/KM1235421?gsi=7So1UwWq**

- **AT&T Smart Call Blocker** phones work with any landline voice service and on all wireline networks, including legacy TDM-based telephone service, for any consumer with caller ID. AT&T Smart Call Blocker phones range in price from $59.95 to $119.95 and are manufactured by VTech. The phone screens incoming calls from telephone numbers not included on the consumer's list of trusted telephone numbers. More information available at:
  → **https://telephones.att.com/telephones/cordless-telephones/smart-call-blocker**

- Consumer information from AT&T on **how to report fraud**, available at:
  → **http://about.att.com/sites/cybersecurity/resources/contact**

- **Call Blocking Resources** from the FCC available at:
  → **https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/stop-unwanted-calls-and-texts**

- Information on **Robocalls and the Do-not-call Registry** from the FTC available at:
  → **https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/media-resources/do-not-call-registry/robocalls**

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