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Testimony before the
United States House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection
"Do Not Call: Combating Robocalls and Caller ID Spoofing"
April 27, 2018

Chairman Latta, Ranking Member Pallone, and members of the Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today.

My name is Aaron Foss. I'm the founder of Nomorobo and the winner of the FTC Robocall Challenge. Since launching in 2013, Nomorobo has stopped almost 650 million robocalls from reaching American citizens. And while that number is huge, it's a mere drop in the bucket. According to our data, approximately 40% of all calls on the landline network are unwanted robocalls.

I'm here today to give you a view "from the trenches." Let me start off by telling you the good news.

The same technology that created this problem, low cost voice-over-IP, is now being used to successfully stop it. In its first year, Nomorobo stopped 15 million robocalls from reaching American consumers. We're now stopping more than double that amount - 30 million robocalls - every single month. This is much better than the old solution which was to "only answer numbers that you recognize."

When I first started this crusade, carriers believed that FCC regulations prohibited them from blocking robocalls. But, since the FCC clarified that the regulations do indeed allow robocall blocking, carriers have been quick to act. Today, Nomorobo is supported by most of the major VoIP providers in the US and directly integrated with some of the largest.

Mobile technology companies like Apple and Google have also done a great job in making their smartphone ecosystems robocall blocker friendly. They now allow developers to create and distribute robocall blocking apps to hundreds of millions of users.

There used to be a lot of fear when it came to stopping robocalls. Many people thought that technology couldn't differentiate between good and bad robocalls. Nomorobo proved this incorrect. The service is 97% effective with a false positive rate of only .1%.

So, on the one hand, I know that for over 1.6 million Nomorobo users, we've solved their robocall problem once and for all. Their phones are now peaceful and quiet. And I wish I could stop my testimony right there and we could end the conversation right now.

Unfortunately, I can't.

It's a jungle out there and the robocallers have started to use more advanced tricks and tactics. We have to continually stay one step ahead of the bad guys. Simple blacklists are no longer as effective in stopping robocalls as they once were.

Last summer, we noticed an explosion in "neighbor spoofed" calls. These calls, where the robocaller uses a fake number that looks very similar to the recipient's number, used to represent less than 2% of all robocalls. Beginning in July of 2017, neighbor spoofed calls represented almost 20% of all robocalls. That's a 10x increase.

Luckily, technology like Nomorobo can quickly detect and stop new robocalling patterns like neighbor spoofing. And while the carriers are also working on a solution - verifying and certifying Caller ID – it's still years away. Robocallers are flexible and quickly and continually change their tactics. The tools to fight them also have to be flexible and adaptable.

We're at a very interesting point in the robocall battle.

Technology has proven that it's a safe and effective solution in the fight. Regulators have cleared the path for carriers to roll out robocall blocking solutions to their customers. Consumers have shown that they want these services and are even willing to pay for them.

Robocall blocking is a virtuous cycle. The more people that use robocall blockers, the less effective robocalling becomes. The less effective robocalling becomes, the less robocalls are made. Everyone wins.

To close, I just want to remind everyone why we're solving this problem. This isn't just about stopping a minor annoyance. Robocalls present a significant threat, particularly to some of our most vulnerable citizens. I was reminded of this the other day when I received the following email:

> *"My name is Phil. I just wanted you to know how thankful [I am] for your service. I have a bad brain injury and the calls I was getting fooled me. Thank you for offering the service for free. My income has been tough to manage and adding an extra cost even small can add up each month."*

I thank the committee for continuing to do everything in its power to make robocall blocking solutions like Nomorobo available to all Americans.