

Statement of Congressman Doug Collins
Subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial and Administrative Law
Hearing on: "The State of Competition in the Wireless Market: Examining
the Impact of the Proposed Merger of T-Mobile and Sprint on Consumers,
Workers, and the Internet"
Tuesday, March 12, 2019
FINAL

Thank you, Chairman Cicilline and Ranking Member
Sensenbrenner for holding this hearing.

This nation's communications infrastructure is of paramount
importance. It helps to bind together America's families and
communities, it's critical to our economy and it's vital to our
national security.

The proposed merger of T-Mobile and Sprint raises
significant issues for the future of our communications system.
America is rapidly continuing its shift to primary reliance on
wireless and fiber-optic infrastructure for its communications
needs, and T-Mobile and Sprint are two of just four nationwide
wireless companies serving those needs.

The proposed merger, moreover, comes precisely as markets in the U.S. and abroad begin the transition to the next wave of wireless technology – 5G. Whether the merger, if approved, will help or hinder the fastest, strongest transition to 5G has far-reaching implications for families, students, small business owners, major companies and everyone beyond and in between. It is no understatement to say that the proposed merger has serious implications including whether the U.S. will continue to lead the world in communications innovation and the advanced goods and services that depend upon it.

I expect the Department of Justice's Antitrust Division and the Federal Communications Commission to resolve with the fullest application of their expertise whether the proposed merger meets legal standards for approval. My concern at this hearing is that Congress help to elevate the profile of issues and explore for the benefit of American families what the future consequences of approval or disapproval would be.

One area I greatly look forward to hearing about is the potential this merger could have to help improve communications across rural America, like in northeast Georgia. Of the four national carriers, including T-Mobile and Sprint none are serving rural districts like mine well enough. If the merger will not improve access, rural America will only suffer more. If it will improve access, then welcome relief may be on its way.

Another question is whether Sprint will disappear no matter what happens with the merger. There are those who claim that, for financial reasons, Sprint will soon no longer be a viable national competitor. If that's true, the question could simply be whether we go from four to three national competitors because of the merger or because Sprint goes into bankruptcy. The question may even be whether we go from four to *two*, because eventually, if T-Mobile is left alone in competition with AT&T and Verizon, it too will ultimately go under.

But there are also those who claim that Sprint will be financially viable going forward. They assert that, if Sprint remains

independent, scores of regional competitors who rely on its market-leading support of roaming services will help to build out a 5G network even faster than the merged T-Mobile and Sprint could. They also claim that will be especially true in rural areas.

For the benefit of my constituents, I want to hear everything I can today about the potential this merger has for positive or negative impact on rural communities.

I commend the Subcommittee for holding this hearing on the proposed merger. I am also delighted that the Subcommittee is beginning this term of Congress with two consecutive antitrust hearings. Our antitrust jurisdiction is critical and I am eager to continue its reinvigoration this term.

I look forward to each of the witnesses' testimonies and yield back the balance of my time.

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Word Count: 551