

February 4, 2021

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce  
Energy & Commerce Committee  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gus M. Bilirakis  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce  
Energy & Commerce Committee  
2322A Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Schakowsky and Ranking Member Bilirakis:

Thank you for holding today's important hearing, "Safeguarding American Consumers: Fighting Fraud and Scams During the Pandemic," which will examine the rise of scams occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic and strategies for federal and state government and the private sector to work together to protect the public.

I am pleased to share with the committee our work to combat illegal robocalls scamming and spoofing American consumers. USTelecom leads the Industry Traceback Group, a team of providers across the wireline, wireless, VoIP and cable industries who collaborate to trace the source of illegal robocalls and coordinate with federal and state enforcement agencies to bring scammers to justice.

Unfortunately, robocall scammers were out in force during this public health emergency, using COVID-19 to trick, manipulate and otherwise prey on vulnerable consumers. As soon as these scams started appearing, we began to aggressively trace them around the world. We don't just go after the scammers, but the under the radar voice service providers who let billions of these junk calls onto our shared communications network in the first place. We then coordinate with industry to raise awareness about the source of the illegal calls and with enforcement officials at the state and federal level.

Some of these tracebacks cut off paths into the United States for multiple COVID-19 robocalls scams. For example:

- The Industry Traceback Group traced a COVID-19 testing kit scam to a VoIP provider in the Philippines. ITG notified the provider it was carrying suspect traffic bound for the U.S. and within 24 hours the provider indicated it severed its relationship with the customer and the calls stopped.

- The Industry Traceback Group traced a COVID-19 HVAC duct cleaning scam to a Florida provider receiving the calls from Pakistan. After notification by ITG, downstream call providers receiving traffic from the Florida entity intervened and the calls stopped.
- The Industry Traceback Group traced a COVID-19 work from home for Amazon scam. In about an hour, ITG traced the calls to a provider in California who stopped taking the illegal calls from a customer based in Utah.
- Hospitals, already tested by the pandemic, are also targets of illegal robocallers. In one instance, the Industry Traceback Group working with one of its members quickly traced back a telephone denial-of-service attack against a hospital's emergency line, ultimately identifying the source of the attack and building a case for the FBI.

The work of the ITG has been facilitated by this committee's leadership in passing the TRACED Act, a landmark law that bolsters government enforcement, including criminal prosecution of entities and individuals actively engaged in efforts to defraud Americans. USTelecom's ITG is now the FCC's designated traceback consortium. We are proud to coordinate and share information on illegal and often fraudulent robocalls with government partners, including the Federal Communications Commission, the Federal Trade Commission, the Department of Justice and virtually every state Attorney General.

In separate letters in April and May related to our coordination to combat COVID-19 robocall scams, the FCC and FTC called this public private partnership "essential to combatting the deluge of unlawful robocalls and protecting consumers and is particularly vital in swiftly identifying scammers who attempt to defraud consumers during the COVID-19 disease outbreak."

Thank you again for bringing added attention to this topic by holding today's hearing. USTelecom and the members of the Industry Traceback Group remain committed to working with the Congress and across federal and state enforcement agencies to combat illegal robocalls. More information about our work is available at <http://www.ustelecom.org/the-ustelecom-industry-traceback-group-itg>. We look forward to being a resource on this and other topics to you and your staff.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Spalter  
President and CEO  
USTelecom – The Broadband Association

Cc: The Honorable Frank Pallone  
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers