

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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August 20, 2021

The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel
Acting Chairwoman
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Acting Chairwoman Rosenworcel:

The Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy is writing to request information about the ongoing efforts of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to address spam text messages. Last year scammers stole at least \$86 million through fraud originating in spam texts. The median amount consumers lost in these scams was \$800.¹

Since June 30, 2021, FCC has required phone service providers to implement “STIR/SHAKEN” technology to combat robocalls by verifying the sources of the calls.² This technology will help reduce the number of robocalls consumers receive and will allow FCC to identify bad actors and hold them accountable.

As STIR/SHAKEN has its intended effect of reducing the effectiveness of robocalls, bad actors will likely shift their attention to other means of scamming consumers. Spam texts appear to be a likely vehicle for scammers to use.

In 2019, the House of Representatives passed the Stopping Bad Robocalls Act, which, if enacted, would provide further protections for consumers against robocalls and robotexts.³

¹ Federal Trade Commission, *Consumer Sentinel Network Data Book 2020* (Feb. 2021) (online at www.ftc.gov/system/files/documents/reports/consumer-sentinel-network-data-book-2020/csn_annual_data_book_2020.pdf).

² Federal Communications Commission, *Press Release: STIR/SHAKEN Broadly Implemented Starting Today* (June 30, 2021) (online at <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-373714A1.pdf>). STIR stands for “secure telephone identity revisited,” and SHAKEN stands for “signature-based handling of asserted information using tokens.”

³ H.R. 3375, 116th Cong. (2019).

In Illinois, we have seen a rise in spam texts, many designed to appear as if they are coming from Illinois government agencies.⁴ In March 2021, Illinois received the third-most spam texts per capita. Of the 7.4 billion spam texts sent to Americans in March, Illinoisans received an estimated 301,190,677. Illinois's 28 spam texts per capita during the month trailed the per capita numbers of only Texas and Georgia.⁵

We want to be able to inform our constituents about the important work that FCC is doing to protect them from spam texts, and we want to be able to give them the best advice on how to protect themselves from scams. To assist the Subcommittee in this matter, please contact Subcommittee staff by August 27, 2021, to set up a staff briefing on FCC's efforts to address spam texts.

The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Subcommittee staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Chairman

Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy

cc: The Honorable Michael Cloud, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy

⁴ *Illinois Residents Targeted By Scam Text Messages*, WGN9 (May 27, 2021)(online at <https://wgntv.com/news/illinois-residents-targeted-by-scam-text-messages/>).

⁵ *Press Release: Robocall Record: 7.4 Billion Spam Texts Surpass Total Robocalls by More than One Billion Messages in March 2021*, RoboKiller (Apr. 1, 2021)(online at www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/robocall-record-7-4-billion-spam-texts-surpass-total-robocalls-by-more-than-1-billion-messages-in-march-2021--301260890.html).