



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Chris Jacobs

## Jacobs Sponsors Legislation to Tackle Cell Phone Scam Calls

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(Buffalo, NY) – New York State Senator Chris Jacobs announced today that he will be sponsoring legislation that will enable telecommunication providers to block preemptively phone numbers that are the source of unsolicited automated phone calls. Commonly known as robocalls, these pre-recorded messages are rising at an alarming rate as scammers continue to use new technologies to evade Do Not Call Registries.

“Telecommunication industry reports project that in the coming year nearly 50 percent of all cell phone calls will be scams,” said Jacobs. “Consumers are having their privacy invaded and being harassed at unprecedented levels, and we must take action to protect them from these illegal and unwanted calls.”

The percentage of scam calls in U.S mobile traffic grew from 3.7 percent to 29.2 percent in the last year, and it is predicted to rise to 44.6 percent in 2019. One of the more popular methods used by scammers is something called neighborhood spoofing where a local prefix is used to fool people into thinking the call is safe to pick up. In still other cases, the scammer actually hijacks someone’s number and uses it for their calls, creating additional victims.

Joining Senator Jacobs at the press conference was Warren Clark, CEO of the Upstate New York Better Business Bureau. “Scammers know that people are more likely to pick up the phone if they think it’s a local call,” said Clark. “Unfortunately, answering one of these calls lets the scammer know that you have an active phone line. BBB advice is not to answer the call. We find that if it is a legitimate call, that person will leave you a message. This legislation is a good first step to protect consumers and their cell phones.”

Jacobs’ bill would create a new section of the general business law that would give providers the ability to block phone numbers that meet certain criterion that identify the call as likely fraudulent based on the type of number it originates from. The legislation would codify into state law rules and regulations adopted in 2017 by the Federal Communications Commission.

Carriers and industry experts have determined that in-network solutions that leverage sophisticated data analysis and machine learning are more accurate at pinpointing the origin of a call and identifying it before it reaches a customer’s phone than third-party call blocking apps.

If approved in both houses and signed by the Governor, the bill would take effect on July 1, 2019. Jacobs said he believes swift action needs to be taken before telemarketers and scammers completely dominate cell phone traffic.

“Cell phones have gone from being a modern day convenience to a necessity in our daily lives,” said Jacobs. “We need to take steps to curb the outrageous abuses that are permeating cell communications and restore the integrity of this vital service,” the Senator concluded.