



Ohio General Assembly
House of Representatives
Columbus

Sponsor Testimony of Representatives Jonathan Dever and Keith Faber
House Bill 597
Before the House Criminal Justice Committee

Chair Manning, ranking member Celebrezze, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on behalf of House Bill 597 which would criminalize the practice known as “spoofing.” In recent months, innocent Ohioans have been inundated with calls that seemingly originate from their home service area. Telemarketers and spammers have begun to impersonate real phone numbers, a practice known as spoofing, to gain the confidence of their intended victims. Often times, these are the actual phone numbers of our friends and families that have been hijacked for nefarious purposes. The risks inherent from this practice are clear, scammers stand to exploit and profit off of everyone, especially those most susceptible to this kind of exploitation, the elderly, disabled, and anyone in a protected class.

House Bill 597 would prohibit using or repeating a telephone number, exchange, or misleading caller identification information that is not assigned to the caller, with the intent to defraud, cause harm, or wrongfully attain anything of value. Violators of this statute would be charged with a fifth degree felony for stealing a phone number or a fourth degree felony for providing misleading caller ID information. These penalties would be increased if the victim of a “spoofing” call is of a protected class. An important point of note is that these penalties would not apply to anyone using “unknown” or “blocked” phone numbers. In addition, a person injured by a violation of House Bill 597 would have a cause of action to be entitled to remedies including the goods and services agreed to without an obligation to pay.

Chair Manning, ranking member Celebrezze, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, the issue of spoofed phone numbers is far more insidious than just being an annoyance. Using this practice, scammers, telemarketers, and debt collectors can appear to be



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anyone they want, from the IRS to the county auditor and anyone in between for the purpose of confusing or defrauding Ohio's citizens. House Bill 597 is a simple and straightforward redress to this issue, providing law enforcement and the Attorney General the tools necessary to go after these criminals. Thank you again for the opportunity to give sponsor testimony before the committee, I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.