Hello Chair Callender, Vice-Chair Wilkin, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the
House Public Utilities Committee. I thank you and the Resolution’s sponsors and co-sponsors for
this opportunity for OCC to testify as a proponent of HCR 12.

The Resolution calls for Congress to pass legislation granting the Federal
Communications Commission greater authority to protect consumers from unwanted robocalls
and from the spoofing of phone numbers on consumers’ Caller ID displays. OCC, which has
participated over the years in many consumer issues involving development of the telephone
network, finds it very unfortunate that today’s network technology is being misused in this
fashion against Ohio consumers.

The numbers of robocalls are staggering. Robocallindex reports that in the month of
October 2019, 221 million robocalls (or 82 per second) were placed to Ohioans.

But it gets worse. Robocalls can be accompanied by Caller ID spoofing. Spoofing is a
deception intended to trick the recipient consumer into answering a call that otherwise would
have gone unanswered. And this trick can be used to deceive consumers about the true nature of
the call, which can be of bad intent.

For example, the PUCO Staff recently investigated a rip-off artist named Verde Energy,
that markets electricity and natural gas to consumers. Verde has been listed on the PUCO’s
Apples-to-Apples website as selling natural gas to Dominion consumers at three times the
competitive market rate (of Dominion’s standard offer). The PUCO Staff reported that Verde
Energy had spoofed telephone numbers in the course of its exploitation of Ohio electric and
natural gas consumers. (See PUCO Staff Report of Investigation, Case 19-958-GE-COI, pages 9-
10 (May 3, 2019).) On page 10 of its Report, the PUCO Staff stated that:

Staff first notified Verde of spoofing allegations on December 21, 2018.
However, Staff continues to receive complaints of this nature. Therefore,
Staff has determined that Verde had not ceased its spoofing activities and
continues to allow the deceptive practice to continue.

OCC recommends that the General Assembly enact legislation for a policy of “one and
done” regarding energy marketers that spoof Caller ID information to deceive Ohioans. One and
done means that energy marketers found to be spoofing should be “done” with any future
opportunity to operate in Ohio. Under an approach of one and done, the PUCO should be
required to permanently bar such bad actors from entering Ohio to market energy to consumers.
And the PUCO should be required to permanently revoke (or deny the renewal of) the state
certificate of bad actors like Verde Energy that already are operating in Ohio. (Verde Energy
recently filed an application to renew its operating certificate to market natural gas to Ohioans.
(PUCO Case 13-2164-GA-CRS).)

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this Resolution to protect Ohio
consumers from robocalling and the spoofing of Caller ID information.