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**Written Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 54  
House Criminal Committee  
October 26, 2021  
Jason Smith, Associate State Director, AARP Ohio**

Chair LaRe, Vice-Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for Senate Bill 54 on behalf of AARP. As a nonpartisan, social mission organization representing individuals aged 50-plus with a national membership of 37 million and approximately 1.5 million members in Ohio, AARP is deeply interested in protecting Ohioans from financial exploitation, particularly those 50-plus who are often the targets of such scams.

We greatly appreciate that the bill's sponsor, Senator Theresa Gavarone, has continued the work started by former Senator Burke with Senate Bill 145 (133rd General Assembly). We'd also like to acknowledge Attorney General Dave Yost for his work on this issue and his support of the bill. We have had the privilege of working with Attorney General Yost to educate AARP members on fraud and scams as part of our Fraud Watch Network outreach and advocacy.

Not only would this legislation bring the Ohio Revised Code closer in step with federal telecommunication fraud law, it would make Ohio a leader in combatting robocall schemes. We are particularly interested in Section 2913.05 that targets individuals who mask their calls, known as "spoofing," to have the same area code as the intended victim. We're also very supportive of the language in Section 2913.05, which makes it a fourth-degree felony if the victim is an elderly person or disabled adult.

Older Ohioans are often the target of these illegal schemes, cheating them out of their hard-earned money. Unfortunately, criminals never let a good crisis go to waste. We have heard about our members being targeted for fraud by promising access to COVID-19 vaccine waitlists and utilizing the confusion about scheduling appointments across Ohio to obtain personal and banking information. We have to ensure that the Ohio Revised Code and the public officials entrusted with protecting Ohioans from telecommunications fraud have all the tools at their disposal to combat this terrible practice.

[1] <https://www.aarp.org/ppi/issues/caregiving/info-2020/nursing-home-covid-dashboard.html?cmp=RDRCT-350d888f-20201013>



We favorably ask for passage of Senate Bill 54. Thank you for this opportunity to share our testimony supporting Senate Bill 54. Please feel free to contact AARP Ohio if you wish to discuss our position further.

