



Testimony to the Economic Matters Committee
HB1228 Consumer Protection - Telephone Solicitation - Exemptions and Waiver of Remedies
Position: Favorable

2/29/2024

February 22, 2024

The Honorable C.T. Wilson, Chair

House Economic Matters Committee

Room 231, House Office Building

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

cc: Members, House Economic Matters

Honorable Chair Wilson and members of the committee:

Economic Action Maryland (formerly the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition) is a people-centered movement to expand economic rights, housing justice, and community reinvestment for working families, low-income communities, and communities of color. Economic Action Maryland provides direct assistance today while passing legislation and regulations to create systemic change in the future.

As an organization with a long history of advocating for consumer rights, I am writing today to urge your favorable report on HB1228, which improves the Stop Spam Calls Act from 2023 through clarification and additional provisions.

In 2021, Marylanders received more than a billion robocalls (see Robocalls in Maryland graph), about 424 million (42%) of which were scam robocalls—or about 7 scam robocalls for each Marylander per month. The majority of these calls were scam calls designed to bilk Maryland residents of their hard-earned money. In our work with older adults and other consumers, we hear story after story of how an individual lost money after falling prey to a telemarketing scam. It is critical that we rein in these robocalls and spam calls and create stronger protections for our residents.

HB1228 expands upon last year's consumer protections by ensuring an individual can not contract their rights away under this version of the bill. The restrictions on waiving requirements and remedies, except under specific circumstances of the settlement of a legal dispute or action, prevent organizations from easily avoiding accountability. This ensures that consumer protection measures remain intact and can be enforced consistently.

For these reasons, we urge your favorable report on HB1228.

Sincerely,

Zoe Gallagher, Policy Associate