



# Oregon Citizens' Utility Board

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April 20, 2023

To: Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Bonham and members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Business

From: Jennifer Hill-Hart, Policy Manager, Oregon Citizens' Utility Board (CUB)

Re: Support for HB 2759A

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CUB is a membership-based 501(c)3 nonprofit consumer advocacy organization that represents the interests of Oregon households by advocating for utility regulations and policies that protect your wallet. We believe HB 2759A will further protect Oregon households from financial scams that take away the hard-earned money of our well-meaning friends, family, and neighbors.

Oregonians should be protected from phone scams, particularly those that threaten their financial stability. As you have heard, these scammers prey on vulnerable Oregonians, like our parents and grandparents. A CUB member recently told us that she regularly gets phone calls from a “scared” young man claiming to be her grandson and pleading for money to resolve a minor traffic accident. He says he needs the funds immediately or else the other driver will call the police and claim the grandson purposely caused the accident. To which our member replies: which grandson are you? *Click.*

While we wish all members could be this savvy, scams like this pull at the heartstrings of loving grandparents and prey on other honest, hard-working Oregonians. With HB 2759A, Oregon can help the fight against these manipulative scammers. And we believe this bill is specifically targeted at the gatekeepers – the companies that knowingly contract with scammers to receive income from each call they patch through. This bill puts these providers on notice that people are more important than profits. Importantly, it also provides Oregonians with the opportunity to sue these providers to recover the funds lost in a scam. This Committee has heard testimony that highlights the significant harm to individuals from a robocall scam. While the number of scam victims in Oregon may not be high, the impact on the individuals who are scammed is significant and often life-altering. These Oregonians should be able to fight back against predators by holding the gatekeepers accountable for enabling thieves' access to our lives and wallets.

HB 2759A gives Oregon additional means to protect our families, friends, and neighbors. It provides a direct remedy for recovery of funds scammed, but just as important, this bill will discourage providers from entering contracts with robocall scammers. CUB understands from the public hearing before this Committee there may be an additional amendment that further clarifies this bill targets the gatekeeper providers. We expect that we will support those further clarifications but will need to review any additional amendments before taking a position. We urge your support of this bill that will defend Oregonians from the significant, life-changing consequences of these scams, and sends the message that this predatory behavior will not be tolerated in Oregon. Thank you for your time and consideration.