

June 30, 2022

VIA ECFS

Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street NE
Washington, DC 20554

RE: CG Docket No. 17-59 - Advanced Methods to Target and Eliminate Unlawful Robocalls

Dear Ms. Dortch:

The Voice on the Net Coalition (“VON”), INCOMPAS, and the Cloud Communications Alliance (“CCA”) jointly submit this ex parte letter in support of the communication from a number of financial and other industry trade associations to ATIS and the SIP Forum regarding necessary features of a 603+ standard for real-time notification of analytics-based blocking.¹ VON, INCOMPAS, and the CCA have previously urged the Federal Communications Commission (“Commission”) to adopt a uniform, standard real-time notification that calls were being blocked in the network based on the use of “reasonable analytics.”² We concur with the Associations that the best standard for real time notification of analytics-based blocking is through the use of SIP Code 608 and we join their request that the standards-setting bodies continue their work in developing an operational 608 standard.

As reflected in recent submissions by USTelecom, the standards setting bodies have focused their efforts to date on an enhancement of the existing 603 SIP Code referred to as 603+.³ The enhancement is necessary because the SIP Code 603 standard set forth in IETF documentation was not developed to indicate network-based blocking but instead to signify that the call recipient had declined the call. Unlike the 608 standard developed by IETF, a 603 notification does not provide actionable information for the calling party or its originating provider.

¹ Letter from Michael H. Pryor, outside counsel to the Credit Union National Association, et al., to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, filed in CG Docket No. 17-59 (June 17, 2022) (“Associations Letter.”), attaching May 16, 2022 letter from the Associations to ATIS and the SIP Forum.

² *See, e.g.*, Reply Comments of VON, INCOMPAS and CCA, CG 17-59 (Feb. 14, 2022); Letter from Glenn Richards, outside counsel to VON, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, filed CG Docket No. 17-59 (March 1, 2022) (“Joint Ex Parte”).

³ Letter from Joshua Bercu, V.P. Policy & Advocacy, USTelecom, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CG Docket No. 17-59 (filed June 6, 2022) (noting that work on 603+ standard is advancing most quickly.) *See also* Letter from Joshua Bercu, V.P. Policy & Advocacy, USTelecom, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CG Docket No. 17-59, (filed June 23, 2022) (noting that a 603+ standard is nearly finalized) (“USTelecom June 23rd ex parte”).

Nevertheless, and without prejudice to our prior and continuing request to finalize an operational standard for 608, we concur with the Associations that any 603+ standard must include a number of critical features and functions to meet the Commission's requirements for immediate call blocking notification when a provider has used analytics to block a caller's call.⁴ The Associations identified those functions in their letter to ATIS and the SIP Forum attached to their June 17th FCC filing. Should the Commission approve continued use of a 603 notification to fulfill its notification mandate, we respectfully request that the Commission require that that 603+ standard conform to the specifications set forth in the Associations' letter. This includes a standardized reason phrase indicating network blocking based on analytics and standardized formats for identifying and providing contact information for the blocking entity. According to a recent USTelecom submission, the 603+ standard under development would include a standard reason phrase and reason header with contact information for redress.⁵

Testing of a 603+ standard is also critically important. Various providers have indicated that having to query additional header information to determine the basis of blocking may delay the organization's ability to determine that calls were blocked in the network due to analytics and that this problem becomes more acute as calling volumes increase.⁶ Both originating providers and their calling customers should have the ability to participate in testing of the new 603+ standard in order to assess its efficacy and any necessary expenditures to upgrade equipment or software.

The proliferation of network-based blocking based on analytics will inevitably lead to increased blocking of legitimate calls necessitating real-time notifications that can be automatically processed. The Commission should ensure that any 603+ standard meets the TRACED Act's requirements of transparent and effective redress, without undue costs to callers, before making any final determinations on the use and deployment of 608 and/or 603+. As the Associations state, it is certainly premature to abandon work on a 608 operational standard.

Respectfully submitted,

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⁴ USTelecom and others have expressed concern that the J-card encrypted contact information feature of the 608 code significantly complicates development and implementation of that standard. We concur with the Associations that 608 can be implemented with the J-card and contact information can be provided without encryption, as contemplated in the 603+ standard under development.

⁵ USTelecom June 23rd ex parte at 1-2.

⁶ See, e.g., Letter from Laura Phillips, outside counsel to the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CG Docket No. 17-59, (filed June 6, 2022); Associations Letter at 3-4.

/s/

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