

I am pleased that we are here today to discuss H.R. 3993, the Calling Card Consumer Protection Act of 2009, and I congratulate my colleague Mr. Engel for introducing it.

This bill moved very quickly in the last Congress, passing the House easily by voice vote. I hope that we can move as quickly this time around on this important consumer protection bill.

Today, more than 276 million American households and 89 percent of the U.S. population have cell phones. But prepaid calling cards remain a huge industry – worth \$4 billion in 2007.

They are particularly popular among college students, as well as military personnel and immigrant communities – people who frequently make international calls.

My district is one of the most diverse and international in the nation. Almost one-third (31.6%) of my constituents are foreign-born, first-generation American residents. So calling cards are very important for them.

Unfortunately, the calling card industry is full of deceptive advertising and hidden fees. A card may say it is worth 250 minutes, but you may get 200 or 100 once you actually use it. Or even zero minutes! - since some cards come with phone numbers that never connect or send you to a busy signal. Too often, calling cards have no information listed about connection fees, varying rates-per-minute, fees charged each week that you do not use the card, or even fees

for just hanging up!

Such abusive and unfair practices must stop. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses whether they believe the Calling Card Consumer Protection Act is sufficient or whether we need to go even further.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. I yield back the balance of my time.