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2018-19 Commissioner of Consumer Protection

The United States of America has long stood as one of the world's largest economies and consumer marketplaces, and New York State continues to be one of the chief contributors to that standing. When New York consumers decide where to spend (or save) their paychecks, they should have faith that their hard earned dollars are protected against those who wish to defraud, scam, or mislead them. The job of the Department of Consumer Protection and its Commissioner is to stand as the bulwark between consumers and those who wish to do them harm as well as businesses which routinely put profits and shareholders before ethics and transparency. As the Commissioner of Consumer Protection, I will uphold my duty to defend and advocate for the interests of New York consumers, and I will wholeheartedly support any bills which seek to further those goals.

According to the National Retail Federation (NRF), it is estimated American consumers will spend over 700 billion dollars in the 2018 holiday season alone. New York State is one of the nation's largest economies, and it's also home to one of the most diverse consumer markets. With citizens from Long Island to top of the Adirondack Park and all the way out to Lake Erie, the needs of New York consumers are just as diverse as the communities they inhabit. A stock broker in Manhattan is going to have very purchasing habits from a farmer in the Hudson Valley. No matter how the needs of our consumers may differ, they should be protected all the same, and there is no shortage of threats.

In 2017, Target paid out an \$18.5 million dollar settlement to its 41 million customers who had personal data stolen by hackers, including credit card and social security numbers. Equifax, one of the world's largest credit agencies, experienced a similar breach announced the same year, exposing even more sensitive information on up to 143 million Americans. Many New Yorkers are woefully unaware of the chemicals or harmful preservatives in the foods they eat everyday due to lack of adequate labeling laws. On top of that, the FTC must regularly warn against phishing scams over the phone (which from personal experience I can confirm are on the rise). This list of threats to consumers seems daunting even without mentioning the malpractices of the banking and financial industries on Wall Street, which directly contributed to the 2008 housing market crash, causing 8 million Americans lose their homes.

It is my belief that New York State has the brightest future of any state in the union, and I believe we can and must do better to protect the hard earned dollars of those who call this great State home. It is my job as this year's Commissioner of Consumer Protection to help facilitate and support the great bills and ideas from our conference which can indeed help make a difference. Whether it is seeking to regulate the financial services industry, or its food labeling or fraud prevention, the incredible ideas from our conference can help us to fulfil our obligation to do better by our consumers. It is in our best interest as a State and as a conference to ensure New York consumers feel safe and well informed enough to spend money in our economy, and to make sure that big business acts in the wellbeing of its customers by protecting their information and health ahead of their own bottom line. It is my honor to serve as this year's Commissioner of Consumer Protection, and I am looking forward to seeing and advocating on behalf of the great bills this year's conference will undoubtedly produce.