

No. _____

IN THE
Supreme Court of the United States

DAY PACER LLC, EDUTREK L.L.C.,
RAYMOND FITZGERALD, AND IAN FITZGERALD,
Petitioners,

v.

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION,
Respondent.

**On Petition for a Writ of Certiorari
to the United States Court of Appeals
for the Seventh Circuit**

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI

TERANCE A. GONSALVES
ALSTON & BIRD LLP
227 W. Monroe Street,
Suite 3900
Chicago, IL 60606

ALINA A. ANANIAN
ALSTON & BIRD LLP
350 S. Grand Avenue,
51st Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90071

IAN HEATH GERSHENGORN
Counsel of Record
ADAM G. UNIKOWSKY
JONATHAN J. MARSHALL
JENNER & BLOCK LLP
1099 New York Avenue,
NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 639-6000
igershengorn@jenner.com

QUESTION PRESENTED

The Federal Trade Commission’s (FTC’s) Telemarketing Sales Rule (TSR) makes it an “abusive telemarketing act or practice” for a telemarketer to “[i]nitiat[e] any outbound telephone call” to a person whose number appears on the National Do Not Call Registry. 16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B). The TSR defines “outbound telephone call” to mean “a telephone call initiated by a telemarketer to induce the purchase of goods or services or to solicit a charitable contribution.” *Id.* § 310.2(x). Violations of the TSR give rise to substantial civil monetary penalties.

In this case, petitioners were held liable for millions of violations of the TSR, and jointly and severally hit with a \$28.7 million civil penalty, for allegedly initiating “outbound telephone calls” to individuals on the National Do Not Call Registry. It is undisputed that the accused phone calls were not initiated to induce the recipients to purchase any goods or services or solicit any charitable contributions. The Seventh Circuit agreed with the FTC, however, that the relevant regulatory definition’s express limitation to calls “to induce the purchase of goods or services or to solicit a charitable contribution” could be disregarded. The court of appeals instead held that, despite the regulatory definition, the calls at issue were “outbound telephone calls,” and thus violations of the TSR, because they were phone calls placed by telemarketers.

The question presented is:

Whether a telephone call by a telemarketer that is *not* initiated to induce the purchase of goods or services or solicit a charitable contribution is an “outbound telephone call” for purposes of the TSR.

PARTIES TO THE PROCEEDING

Petitioners Day Pacer LLC, EduTrek L.L.C., Raymond Fitzgerald, and Ian Fitzgerald were defendants-appellants in the court of appeals and defendants in the district court.

Respondent is the Federal Trade Commission, which was plaintiff-appellee in the court of appeals and plaintiff in the district court.

An additional individual, David Cumming, was initially a defendant in the district court but died during the proceedings and was substituted by his estate. Following the court of appeals' holding that the estate could not be substituted, the district court dismissed the estate with prejudice by agreement of the parties. The estate is not a party before this Court.

CORPORATE DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Neither of petitioners Day Pacer LLC and EduTrek L.L.C. has a parent corporation, and no publicly held corporation owns 10% or more of the stock of either petitioner. Petitioners Raymond Fitzgerald and Ian Fitzgerald are natural persons.

RELATED PROCEEDINGS

United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois:

Federal Trade Commission v. Day Pacer LLC, et al.,
No. 1:19-cv-1984 (Sept. 1, 2023)

United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit:

Federal Trade Commission v. Day Pacer LLC, et al.,
No. 23-3310 (Jan. 3, 2025)

*Federal Trade Commission v. Margaret E. Cum-
ming, in her capacity as personal representative of
the Estate of David T. Cumming*, No. 24-1273 (Jan.
3, 2025)

*Federal Trade Commission v. Margaret E. Cum-
ming, in her capacity as personal representative of
the Estate of David T. Cumming*, No. 24-1288 (Mar.
6, 2024)

Federal Trade Commission v. Day Pacer LLC, et al.,
No. 24-1289 (Jan. 3, 2025)

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PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI

Petitioners Day Pacer LLC et al. respectfully petition for a writ of certiorari to review the judgment of the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

INTRODUCTION

This petition challenges the Federal Trade Commission’s (FTC’s) campaign to punish petitioners¹ for their speech based on the FTC’s indefensible interpretation of its regulations. Under an FTC regulation known as the Telemarketing Sales Rule (TSR), it is an “abusive telemarketing act or practice,” and thus a violation of the TSR, for a telemarketer to “[i]nitiat[e] any outbound telephone call” to individuals on the National Do Not Call Registry. 16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B). But to ensure breathing space for free speech and to avoid turning every phone call to a person on the Registry into a federal case, the FTC adopted a narrow regulatory definition of “outbound telephone call.” That term “means a telephone call initiated by a telemarketer *to induce the purchase of goods or services* or to solicit a charitable contribution.” *Id.* § 310.2(x) (emphasis added).² Thus, under the TSR’s

¹ Petitioners are Raymond Fitzgerald and Ian Fitzgerald, individuals held liable for violations of an FTC telemarketing regulation allegedly committed by corporate entities Day Pacer LLC and EduTrek L.L.C., also petitioners here. For simplicity, except where noted, “petitioners” will refer to Day Pacer and EduTrek—*i.e.*, the entities directly accused of violating the regulation.

² All citations herein to Title 16 of the Code of Federal Regulations are to the 2024 edition. Amendments to the TSR took effect in January 2025; while those amendments are not substantively material here, they did change the location of some of the relevant TSR

plain text, it is not a violation for a telemarketer to call an individual on the Registry; that call becomes a violation *only if* it is placed (as relevant here) to induce the recipient to buy something.

The FTC brought an enforcement action against petitioners for several million alleged violations of the TSR. The FTC claimed that petitioners placed illicit “outbound telephone calls” to individuals on the Registry. But at summary judgment, it was undisputed that none of these accused phone calls were placed “to induce the purchase of goods or services or to solicit a charitable contribution,” 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(x); instead, petitioners’ calls were informational only. That should have been the end of this case. Still, the FTC pressed on, asserting that petitioners had placed unlawful “outbound telephone calls” because, when they made calls, they had a *plan* in mind for obtaining *information* that would allow *someone else* to “induce the purchase of goods or services.”

The district court and court of appeals endorsed the FTC’s contorted interpretation of its own regulations. The district court granted summary judgment to the agency and imposed a joint-and-several civil monetary penalty of approximately \$28.7 million. The Seventh Circuit then affirmed on the theory that because petitioners purportedly were part of an illicit “plan” in which others sold goods or services, petitioners satisfied the regulatory definition of a “telemarketer.” And because petitioners were telemarketers that placed phone calls, the court concluded that those calls must be “outbound telephone calls” giving rise to crushing liability. There was (and is) no

provisions. See Telemarketing Sales Rule, 89 Fed. Reg. 99,069, 99,075 (Dec. 10, 2024).

dispute that “outbound telephone calls” is a defined term in the regulation, but neither the FTC nor the court of appeals believed it imperative to pay much mind to the text. The result: tens of millions of dollars of liability for individuals who could never have known, based on the regulation’s clear text, that their conduct was prohibited.

To describe the court of appeals’ holding is to rebut it. The issue in this case is not whether petitioners are “telemarketers.” They are. The issue is whether petitioners are “telemarketers” *that made “outbound telephone calls.”* They are not, and the court of appeals’ contrary conclusion is indefensible.

This Court’s review is warranted. If the Seventh Circuit’s decision is allowed to stand, agencies will be empowered to transform regulatory *definitions* into regulatory *prohibitions*—auguring an unprecedented expansion of agency authority. Worse still, the FTC is twisting its regulations in order to chill speech. The effect of the FTC’s position, which the Seventh Circuit has now blessed, is to punish businesses who place purely informational calls merely because they participate in a commercial ecosystem in which some other actor may make a profit down the line.

The Seventh Circuit is the first appellate court to decide the question presented. But the Court should not await a circuit split because a split may never come. Under the applicable venue provision, the FTC may bring an enforcement action anywhere the defendant “transacts business”—which means anywhere it placed a purportedly illicit phone call. 15 U.S.C. § 53(b). A single call to Chicago, Indianapolis, or Milwaukee is all it will take for a caller to fall within the FTC’s regulatory dragnet. And

having secured an appellate decision endorsing its implausible theory, the FTC will not take the risk of bringing enforcement actions anywhere else. This Court should not let the FTC get away with its abusive rewriting of its regulations.

OPINIONS BELOW

The opinion of the court of appeals (Pet. App. 1a-33a) is reported at 125 F.4th 791. The memorandum opinion and order of the district court (Pet. App. 50a-110a) is reported at 689 F. Supp. 3d 609, and a subsequent order of the district court related to the civil penalty (Pet. App. 34a-39a) is unpublished but is available at 2024 WL 760008.

JURISDICTIONAL STATEMENT

The judgment of the court of appeals was entered on January 3, 2025. A petition for rehearing was denied on March 6, 2025. On May 27, 2025, Justice Barrett extended the time to file a petition for a writ of certiorari until August 3, 2025. *Day Pacer LLC v. FTC*, No. 24A1151 (mem.). The jurisdiction of this Court is invoked under 28 U.S.C. § 1254(1).

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

1. Section 2 of the Federal Trade Commission’s Telemarketing Sales Rule, 16 C.F.R. § 310.2, provides, in relevant part:

§ 310.2 Definitions.

....

(x) *Outbound telephone call* means a telephone call initiated by a telemarketer to induce the purchase of goods or services or to solicit a charitable contribution.

....

(gg) *Telemarketer* means any person who, in connection with telemarketing, initiates or receives telephone calls to or from a customer or donor.

(hh) *Telemarketing* means a plan, program, or campaign which is conducted to induce the purchase of goods or services or a charitable contribution, by use of one or more telephones and which involves more than one interstate telephone call. The term does not include the solicitation of sales through the mailing of a catalog which: contains a written description or illustration of the goods or services offered for sale; includes the business address of the seller; includes multiple pages of written material or illustrations; and has been issued not less frequently than once a year, when the person making the solicitation does not solicit customers by telephone but only receives calls initiated by customers in response to the catalog and during those calls takes orders only without further solicitation. For purposes of the previous sentence, the term “further solicitation” does not include providing the customer with information about, or attempting to sell, any other item included in the same catalog which prompted the customer’s call or in a substantially similar catalog.

....

2. Section 4 of the Federal Trade Commission’s Telemarketing Sales Rule, 16 C.F.R. § 310.4, provides, in relevant part (with footnote omitted):

§ 310.4 Abusive telemarketing acts or practices.

....

(b) *Pattern of calls.*

(1) It is an abusive telemarketing act or practice and a violation of this part for a telemarketer to engage in, or for a seller to cause a telemarketer to engage in, the following conduct:

....

(iii) Initiating any outbound telephone call to a person when:

(A) That person previously has stated that he or she does not wish to receive an outbound telephone call made by or on behalf of the seller whose goods or services are being offered or made on behalf of the charitable organization for which a charitable contribution is being solicited; or

(B) That person's telephone number is on the "do-not-call" registry, maintained by the Commission, of persons who do not wish to receive outbound telephone calls to induce the purchase of goods or services unless the seller or telemarketer:

(1) Can demonstrate that the seller has obtained the express agreement, in writing, of such person to place calls to that person. Such written agreement shall clearly evidence such person's authorization that calls made by or on behalf of a specific party may be placed to that person, and shall include

the telephone number to which the calls may be placed and the signature of that person; or

(2) Can demonstrate that the seller has an established business relationship with such person, and that person has not stated that he or she does not wish to receive outbound telephone calls under paragraph (b)(1)(iii)(A) of this section

....

....

....

STATEMENT

A. The Telemarketing Sales Rule

The FTC’s Telemarketing Sales Rule, or TSR, prohibits its certain deceptive “telemarketing” acts and practices. *See* 16 C.F.R. §§ 310.3–.4. The TSR defines “telemarketing” as “a plan, program, or campaign which is conducted to induce the purchase of goods or services or a charitable contribution” and which “involves more than one interstate telephone call.” *Id.* § 310.2(hh). A “telemarketer” is someone who initiates telephone calls “in connection with telemarketing.” *Id.* § 310.2(gg). The TSR also governs “sellers,” which it defines to mean those “who, in connection with a telemarketing transaction, provide[], offer[] to provide, or arrange[] for others to provide goods or services to the customer in exchange for consideration.” *Id.* § 310.2(ee).

This case concerns a specific category of telemarketing acts that the TSR prohibits: “outbound telephone

calls” placed to numbers on the National Do Not Call Registry, which the TSR declares to be “an abusive telemarketing act or practice.” 16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B). The Registry “is a list containing the personal telephone numbers of telephone subscribers who have voluntarily indicated that they do not wish to receive unsolicited calls from commercial telemarketers.” *Mainstream Mktg. Servs., Inc. v. FTC*, 358 F.3d 1228, 1234 (10th Cir. 2004); see *Mims v. Arrow Fin. Servs., LLC*, 565 U.S. 368, 373-74, 374 n.3 (2012). Under the TSR, “[o]utbound telephone call means a telephone call initiated by a telemarketer to induce the purchase of goods or services or to solicit a charitable contribution.” 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(x).³

The FTC has authority to bring enforcement actions and seek civil monetary penalties from those who violate the TSR. 15 U.S.C. § 45(m)(1)(A). “The maximum civil penalty is adjusted for inflation periodically, ranging from \$16,000 to \$42,530 per violation during the period at issue here.” Pet. App. 3a-4a; see 16 C.F.R. § 1.98(d). The TSR imposes secondary liability on any person who “provide[s] substantial assistance or support to any seller or telemarketer when that person knows or consciously avoids knowing that the seller or telemarketer is engaged in any act or practice that violates” the TSR. 16 C.F.R. § 310.3(b).

³ Outbound telephone calls to individuals on the Registry are permitted if the seller or telemarketer “[c]an demonstrate that the seller” either has obtained written consent from the individual or has an established business relationship with the individual. 16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B)(1)-(2). The applicability of these exceptions was litigated below, see Pet. App. 6a-7a, 12a-14a, but is not relevant in this Court.

When an entity violates the TSR, individuals associated with the entity can be held liable, too. To impose such individual liability, the FTC must show that the individual “knew or should have known” about the violations, and that he “either participated directly” in the violations “or had authority to control them.” *FTC v. Credit Bureau Ctr., LLC*, 937 F.3d 764, 769 (7th Cir. 2019) (quoting *FTC v. World Media Brokers*, 415 F.3d 758, 764 (7th Cir. 2005)).

B. Procedural History

1. The FTC brought a two-count complaint against petitioners. D. Ct. Doc. 1 (Mar. 22, 2019) (Compl.). Count I alleged that petitioners “initiated or caused others to initiate an outbound telephone call to a person’s telephone number on the National Do Not Call Registry in violation of the TSR.” *Id.* ¶ 53. Count II alleged that petitioners “provided substantial assistance and support to one or more Telemarketing Affiliates” who made calls in violation of the TSR. *Id.* ¶ 54.

More specifically, the complaint alleged that petitioners called, and engaged in conversations with, consumers who voluntarily provided their contact information to websites that claimed to help consumers apply for jobs or public assistance. Compl. ¶¶ 15-17. The complaint further alleged that petitioners purchased the consumers’ data, including telephone numbers, from the companies that owned or controlled the websites. *Id.* ¶¶ 17-44.

The record on summary judgment showed that there were two ways petitioners spoke with consumers. First, a data provider, who received the contact information from consumers, would initially speak with the consumers regarding their inquiry. D. Ct. Doc. 219-2, ¶¶ 9-11 (Oct. 1,

2021). If, during the data provider’s conversation, the consumer asked about educational opportunities, the data provider would ask if the consumer consented to being transferred to someone who could provide the consumer with more information. *Id.* ¶ 11. Once the consumer consented, the data provider decided to which company it would transfer the call. *Id.* Petitioners had no control over whether the call would be transferred to them. *Id.* ¶ 12. However, if petitioners received the transfer, they would only accept it if they received, among other things, proof of the consumer’s consent. *Id.* ¶ 14; *see also* D. Ct. Doc. 219-3, ¶¶ 4-14.

Second, a dialing company employed by petitioners would receive consumer contact information from data providers whose websites were accessed by the consumer. D. Ct. Doc. 219-2, ¶ 15. Again, petitioners had no control of whether the data provider would send the consumer contact data to a dialing company employed by them. *Id.* If and when such consumer contact information was received, the dialer company would provide the contact information of the consumer who made the inquiry to petitioners. *Id.*; *see also* D. Ct. Doc. 219-3, ¶ 15.

Regardless of how consumers were connected on calls with petitioners, petitioners did not offer to sell, or sell, any goods or service to consumers on the calls; the calls were purely informational. D. Ct. Doc. 219-2, ¶ 17. Instead, petitioners used the calls to generate “consumer leads” to sell to for-profit education companies. Pet. App. 55a; *see* D. Ct. Doc. 219-2, ¶¶ 17-18. Those for-profit education companies—not petitioners—then used those leads in an effort to enroll people in educational programs. D. Ct. Doc. 219-2, ¶ 18; *see also* D. Ct. Doc. 219-3, ¶¶ 17-18.

2. The parties cross-moved for summary judgment. Pet. App. 51a. Petitioners raised several arguments as to why they had not violated the TSR—including, as relevant here, that the calls petitioners placed were purely informational and did not offer to sell anything to consumers. *Id.* at 81a-82a. The district court rejected that and each of petitioners’ other arguments and entered summary judgment for the FTC in material part. *Id.* at 82a-85a; *see id.* at 50a-110a.⁴

The district court then entered an injunction prohibiting petitioners from participating in telemarketing forever—to anyone. Pet. App. 40a-49a. The court subsequently stayed its injunction pending appeal to permit petitioners to call businesses, but it clarified that petitioners “will continue to be precluded from calling consumers, regardless of their status on the Registry.” D. Ct. Doc. 310, at 1 (Jan. 12, 2024). In a separate order, the district court imposed a civil penalty of approximately \$28.7 million jointly and severally against all petitioners: the corporate entities who had actually committed the violations as well as Raymond Fitzgerald and Ian Fitzgerald. Pet. App. 34a-39a.⁵

⁴ The district court granted summary judgment to petitioners on Count I with respect to calls placed by other entities deemed petitioners’ agents, but granted summary judgment to the FTC on Count II with respect to those calls. Pet. App. 110a. So in sum, petitioners were held liable, either primarily or secondarily, for all the accused calls.

⁵ One individual defendant in the case died during the course of the proceedings and his estate was substituted as a defendant. Pet. App. 40a. The district court held that the estate could properly be substituted as a defendant after concluding that the civil monetary penalty

3. The Seventh Circuit affirmed in relevant part. Pet. App. 1a-33a.

On appeal, petitioners renewed their argument that they had not violated the TSR under the regulation’s plain language because they had not attempted to sell any goods or services. Petitioners emphasized that they were alleged to have unlawfully initiated “outbound telephone calls,” which the TSR defines to mean calls “initiated by a telemarketer to induce the purchase of goods or services or to solicit a charitable contribution.” 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(x); *see* Pet. App. 8a-9a, 14a-15a. And petitioners explained that it was undisputed in the summary-judgment record that the allegedly unlawful calls neither induced the purchase of any goods or services nor solicited any contributions; rather, petitioners were alleged to have merely obtained contact information from individuals on the Do Not Call Registry and then shared that information with others. Pet. App. 8a-9a, 14a-15a.

The court of appeals rejected this argument. It observed that “*telemarketing* is defined broadly as ‘a plan, program, or campaign which is conducted to induce the purchase of goods or services.’” Pet. App. 14a (quoting 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(hh)). And the court also noted that “a telemarketer is one ‘who, in connection with telemarketing,

for TSR violations was remedial, rather than penal. *Id.* at 59a-71a; *see id.* at 6a (“Our circuit permits substitution if the action is primarily remedial, rather than penal.” (citing *Smith v. No. 2 Galesburg Crown Fin. Corp.*, 615 F.2d 407, 413-15 (7th Cir. 1980), *overruled in other part by Pridegon v. Gates Credit Union*, 683 F.2d 182 (7th Cir. 1982))). The court of appeals reversed that determination and held that the estate could not be substituted. *Id.* at 20a-25a. The estate was subsequently dismissed from the case with prejudice, D. Ct. Doc. 361 (June 3, 2025), and is no longer a party.

initiates or receives telephone calls to or from a customer.” *Id.* (quoting 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(gg)). The court further stated that “[t]hroughout the TSR, the phrases ‘outbound telephone call’ and ‘telemarketer’ are used in the same sentence, and by referencing telemarketing—a term defined in the regulation—those references incorporate that definition.” *Id.* at 14a-15a.

The court further observed that the TSR differentiates “sellers” from “telemarketers,” and that “[i]f the TSR had wanted to limit liability for outbound calls only to calls that actually offer to sell services, it could have defined outbound calls as those placed by sellers, not by the more broadly defined telemarketers.” Pet. App. 15a. Thus, the court of appeals was “satisfied” that the TSR’s prohibition on “outbound telephone calls” to numbers on the Registry really meant any telephone calls by telemarketers, regardless how the phrase “outbound telephone call” is defined in the regulation. *Id.*

The court of appeals also acknowledged the evidence that petitioners understood the TSR to prohibit “selling services directly over the phone” but not to prohibit their conduct, which did not involve selling anything. Pet. App. 10a. Indeed, the court also admitted that there was evidence that a State “had cleared [petitioners] of wrongdoing under a law materially similar to the TSR.” *Id.* at 11a. But because the court disagreed with petitioners’ interpretation of the TSR, it disregarded this evidence as a mere “[i]gnorance of the law[.]” defense, noting that “it is not objectively reasonable merely to believe that a law does not prohibit [one’s] activities.” *Id.* at 10a. The court also found it irrelevant whether the individual petitioners had personal involvement in the alleged TSR violations,

relying instead on their status as managers of the companies who had committed those alleged violations. *Id.* at 16a-17a.⁶

4. The court of appeals denied rehearing. Pet. App. 111a-12a.

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE PETITION

The Seventh Circuit’s view of the FTC’s regulatory authority is textually indefensible and will have national ramifications. This Court’s review is warranted.

I. THE DECISION BELOW IMPROPERLY EXPANDS THE APPLICATION OF THE TSR BY UTTERLY IGNORING ITS TEXT.

The Seventh Circuit’s interpretation of the FTC’s regulation is indefensible. The provision of the TSR petitioners are alleged to have violated states that

[i]t is an abusive telemarketing act or practice and a violation of [the TSR] for a telemarketer to engage in, or for a seller to cause a telemarketer to engage in . . . [i]nitiat[ing] any *outbound telephone call* to a person when . . . [t]hat person’s telephone number is on the “do-not-call” registry.

16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B) (emphasis added). The TSR defines an “outbound telephone call” as:

⁶ The court of appeals did, however, hold that petitioner Ian Fitzgerald lacked sufficient authority for part of the period at issue here. Pet. App. 17a-20a.

a telephone call initiated by a telemarketer to induce the purchase of goods or services or to solicit a charitable contribution.

Id. § 310.2(x).

Petitioners never placed any telephone call “to induce the purchase of goods or services or to solicit a charitable contribution.” 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(x). This means they did not violate the regulation.

In reaching a contrary conclusion, the Seventh Circuit reasoned that petitioners satisfied the regulatory definition of “telemarketing,” which encompasses “a plan, program, or campaign . . . to induce the purchase of goods or services.” 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(hh); *see* Pet. App. 14a-15a. But this TSR definition is not a prohibition—it is just a definition. The prohibition is set forth in Section 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B), which requires (1) a “telemarketer” to (2) make an “outbound telephone call,” which is “a telephone call initiated by a telemarketer to induce the purchase of goods or services or to solicit a charitable contribution.” 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(x). The definition of an “outbound telephone call” does not reference any “plan, program or campaign,” as set forth in the definition of a “telemarketer.”

Put more simply: the regulation imposes liability on “telemarketers” who make “outbound telephone calls.” The Seventh Circuit held that petitioners were liable merely because they are “telemarketers.” The court never held—or even considered—whether petitioners made “outbound telephone calls.” It simply erased that term from the regulations.

The Seventh Circuit’s explanations for its conclusion are inscrutable. The court observed that “[t]hroughout the TSR, the phrases ‘outbound telephone call’ and ‘telemarketer’ are used in the same sentence.” Pet. App. 14a-15a. It reasoned that “by referencing telemarketing—a term defined in the regulation—those references incorporate that definition.” *Id.* at 15a. No doubt, the reference to “telemarketer” incorporated the regulatory definition of “telemarketing.” But the reference to “outbound telephone call” incorporates the separate regulatory definition of “outbound telephone call.” Petitioners undisputedly did not satisfy *that* definition.

The court of appeals also reasoned that “[i]f the TSR had wanted to limit liability for outbound calls only to calls that actually offer to sell services, it could have defined outbound calls as those placed by sellers, not by the more broadly defined telemarketers.” Pet. App. 15a. This reasoning makes no sense. The TSR *defines* outbound telephone calls as calls that “actually offer to sell services.” *Id.* The TSR could not have made clearer that it was limiting liability to calls that “actually offer to sell services.” The text—that which went through notice-and-comment rulemaking—is unambiguous that not *all* calls by telemarketers to individuals on the Registry are TSR violations, so the court of appeals’ musings as to other ways the TSR could have also gotten that point across are irrelevant and inappropriate.

Lacking any hook in the regulation’s plain text, the Seventh Circuit resorted to raw considerations of policy. The court of appeals expressed concern that if it interpreted the regulation according to its unambiguous terms, a company could “establish[] a sister organization to

generate its leads from do-not-call individuals,” which could then “obtain the necessary express consent for the principal organization to then place telemarketing calls.” Pet. App. 9a. The court believed that the “regulations do not permit such a loophole.” *Id.*

Needless to say, courts cannot rewrite regulations to address concerns about perceived “loopholes.” If the agency perceives a loophole, it can amend its regulation. In any event, the Seventh Circuit’s concern about creating a “loophole” for telemarketers reflects a misunderstanding of both market realities and existing regulatory tools. Lead-generation companies operate in a competitive marketplace where their value depends on providing qualified, legitimately interested consumers to their clients. Flooding educational institutions with unwilling contacts would destroy their business model faster than any regulatory enforcement. Moreover, the companies purchasing these leads remain fully subject to TSR liability if they violate do-not-call rules when contacting consumers, creating powerful market incentives for lead generators to ensure compliance throughout the chain. The court’s hypothetical about sister companies evading the TSR ignores that such arrangements would constitute either agency relationships or conspiracies already addressable under existing law. There was no need for the Seventh Circuit to stretch the definition of “outbound telephone call” beyond recognition and transform a targeted consumer-protection measure into an omnibus regulation of commercial information flows.

II. THIS COURT’S REVIEW IS WARRANTED.

The Seventh Circuit’s error is sufficiently grave and consequential to warrant this Court’s review.

First, the court of appeals’ decision will cause serious jurisprudential mischief extending well beyond this case. By holding that an entity satisfying the broad definitional requirement of “telemarketer” automatically violates the prohibition against “outbound telephone calls initiated by a telemarketer to induce the purchase of goods or services,” the court effectively read the specific limiting language out of the regulation.

If courts can ignore specific requirements in operative provisions simply because an actor falls within a broad regulatory definition, then agencies’ enforcement authority would expand significantly. Federal regulatory schemes routinely employ broad definitions coupled with narrow operative prohibitions to ensure comprehensive coverage while maintaining precise boundaries on liability: consider, for example, securities regulations that broadly define “dealers” but impose specific obligations only on dealers who engage in particular activities. Under the Seventh Circuit’s approach, merely falling within these broad definitions would create liability, regardless of whether the specific prohibited acts occurred. This cannot be correct—definitions sections exist to establish the universe of potentially regulated entities, not to trigger liability whenever those entities engage in any activity mentioned in the regulatory scheme.

The Seventh Circuit’s decision is not only incompatible with the regulatory text, it also creates grave First Amendment concerns by transforming protected commercial information-gathering into prohibited conduct based solely on the speaker’s downstream business model. It is undisputed that petitioners’ calls involved pure information collection—asking consumers about

their educational interests without promoting any product, service, or commercial transaction. By imposing liability based on those calls, the court’s interpretation sweeps in vast categories of truthful, non-misleading inquiries that pose no threat to consumer protection, simply because the information gathered might eventually facilitate lawful commercial transactions. This Court has consistently rejected such attenuated theories of harm in the First Amendment context, particularly where the regulated speech itself contains no commercial proposal. *See Sorrell v. IMS Health Inc.*, 564 U.S. 552, 570-71 (2011) (striking down restriction on gathering and disseminating truthful commercial information).

Even more troubling, the decision below hands the FTC a unbridled enforcement tool that can easily be used to target those engaged in protected political speech the agency does not like. Under the Seventh Circuit’s view of the TSR, so long as the agency can somehow tie an advocacy phone call to some “plan, program, or campaign . . . to induce the purchase of goods or services or a charitable contribution,” 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(hh), then the advocate is a telemarketer who has violated the TSR—and may wake up to millions of dollars of liability. Indeed, that advocate can wake up to that liability simply by *affiliation* with a company that has apparently violated the TSR: that is precisely what happened in this case.

The Seventh Circuit’s decision will have a significant negative practical effect. The decision effectively imposes strict liability with crushing penalties on businesses that engage in constitutionally protected information-gathering, creating an unprecedented chilling effect on legitimate commercial communications. Under the Seventh

Circuit’s logic, market research firms, polling companies, and data analytics businesses all risk TSR liability whenever their information-gathering activities occur within a larger commercial ecosystem that includes sales. This dramatic expansion occurs without any showing that petitioners’ neutral inquiries—as opposed to actual sales pitches—harm consumers or undermine the Do Not Call Registry’s purposes. The court’s interpretation strikes at the heart of the information economy and exceeds any legitimate regulatory interest in preventing deceptive telemarketing practices.

Notwithstanding the lack of a circuit split, this Court’s immediate review is warranted. The unique structure of TSR enforcement makes a circuit split unlikely to develop through the ordinary percolation process. The FTC’s strategic enforcement choices—bringing actions primarily in circuits with favorable precedent and securing settlements from risk-averse defendants facing catastrophic statutory penalties—create a systematic barrier to the development of conflicting authority. Unlike areas where private litigation naturally generates interpretive conflicts, TSR cases arise almost exclusively through FTC enforcement actions, giving the agency effective control over which legal theories receive judicial review and in which venues. Moreover, the Seventh Circuit’s interpretation immediately subjects thousands of businesses nationwide to potential liability reaching billions of dollars, creating a classic “bet the company” scenario where prudent businesses must either cease legitimate operations or restructure based on one circuit’s erroneous interpretation rather than risk defending their business models in court.

The astronomical penalties at stake—here, close to \$30 million for lead-generation companies (and the individuals held responsible for the companies’ calls) that never sold anything—ensure that future defendants will choose settlement over litigation, effectively insulating the Seventh Circuit’s interpretation from further judicial scrutiny. Waiting for a split that structural forces prevent from arising would allow one circuit’s misinterpretation to become unreviewable national law.

CONCLUSION

The petition for a writ of certiorari should be granted.

Respectfully submitted.

TERANCE A. GONSALVES
ALSTON & BIRD LLP
227 W. Monroe Street,
Suite 3900
Chicago, IL 60606

ALINA A. ANANIAN
ALSTON & BIRD LLP
350 S. Grand Avenue,
51st Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90071

IAN HEATH GERSHENGORN
Counsel of Record
ADAM G. UNIKOWSKY
JONATHAN J. MARSHALL
JENNER & BLOCK LLP
1099 New York Avenue,
NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 639-6000
igershengorn@jenner.com

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APPENDIX

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APPENDIX A

In the
United States Court of Appeals
For the Seventh Circuit

Nos. 23-3310, 24-1273 & 24-1289

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION,

Plaintiff-Appellee,

v.

DAY PACER LLC, et al.,

Defendants-Appellants,

and

MARGARET E. CUMMING, in her capacity as personal representative of the Estate of David T. Cumming,

Defendant-Appellant.

Appeals from the United States District Court for the
for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division.

No. 1:19-cv-01984 — **Lindsay C. Jenkins**, *Judge.*

ARGUED OCTOBER 22, 2024 — DECIDED JANUARY 3, 2025

Before BRENNAN, JACKSON-AKIWUMI, and KOLAR,
Circuit Judges.

BRENNAN, *Circuit Judge*. The National Do Not Call Registry saves millions of consumers from unwanted communications. When telemarketers contact those on the registry, steep penalties can attach. The defendant companies here—Day Pacer LLC and EduTrek L.L.C.—as well as the individuals who ran them were responsible for millions of telemarketing calls to consumers on the registry. As a result, the Federal Trade Commission brought a civil enforcement action against them. The district court found the defendants liable on summary judgment and awarded the Commission over \$28 million in civil penalties. The defendants appeal the court’s liability findings and damages award.

We agree the defendants are liable and affirm the court on that front. For the companies, there is no genuine dispute of material fact that their practices are prohibited by the regulations, nor that they should have known their actions were deceptive. As for the individuals, all either knew or should have known of the companies’ illegal acts, and all had authority to prevent them.

But we reverse and remand the decision to substitute an individual defendant’s estate upon his death and the damages award. The Commission’s suit here was a penal action, which never survives a party’s death. Additionally, the district court did not consider all mandatory statutory factors, so its award was an abuse of discretion.

I

We first review the regulatory backdrop to this case. In passing the Federal Trade Commission Act, Congress prohibited “[u]nfair methods of competition in or affecting commerce, and unfair or deceptive acts or practices in or

affecting commerce.” 15 U.S.C. § 45(a)(1). The Telemarketing and Consumer Fraud and Abuse Prevention Act was added in 1994, providing “consumers necessary protection from telemarketing deception and abuse.” *Id.* § 6101(5).

The Commission has statutory authority to create rules defining unfair and deceptive acts. *Id.* § 57a(a)(1). It promulgated the Telemarketing Sales Rule (TSR) to implement the Telemarketing and Consumer Fraud and Abuse Prevention Act. *See* 16 C.F.R. pt. 310. The TSR defines telemarketing as a “plan, program, or campaign which is conducted to induce the purchase of goods or services . . . by use of one or more telephones.” *Id.* § 310.2(hh).

Relevant here, the TSR prohibits telemarketing communications when the consumer’s number is on the National Do Not Call Registry, subject to only two exceptions. *Id.* § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B). The telemarketer must either have (1) prior express written agreement demonstrating the telemarketer is allowed to call, or (2) an established business relationship with the consumer. *Id.* A party is also prohibited from providing “substantial assistance or support to any seller or telemarketer when that person knows or consciously avoids knowing that the seller or telemarketer” is violating the TSR. *Id.* § 310.3(b).

The Commission can recover civil penalties from TSR violators who had “actual knowledge or knowledge fairly implied on the basis of objective circumstances that such act is unfair or deceptive and is prohibited by such rule.” 15 U.S.C. § 45(m)(1)(A). The maximum civil penalty is adjusted for inflation periodically, ranging from \$16,000 to

\$42,530 per violation during the period at issue here. *See* 16 C.F.R. § 1.98(d). When fashioning a penalty, the district court may not reflexively award the statutory maximum. It must consider “the degree of culpability, any history of prior such conduct, ability to pay, effect on ability to continue to do business, and such other matters as justice may require.” 15 U.S.C. § 45(m)(1)(C).

Day Pacer LLC, and its predecessor EduTrek L.L.C., were companies that generated sales leads. Both purchased consumers’ contact information from websites, usually job-search platforms, where the consumers had entered their information. The companies would then personally call those consumers or contract with other organizations—termed “IBT Partners”—to call them, gauging the consumers’ interest in educational opportunities. If consumers expressed interest, the companies would sell their contact information to for-profit educational institutions.

Between 2014 and 2019, the companies placed approximately 3.7 million calls to consumers on the registry. Additionally, the IBT Partners purportedly transferred another nearly half-million calls to the defendants from consumers on the registry, totaling approximately 4.2 million calls.

During that same period, the companies received multiple complaints, including threatened lawsuits, from do-not-call consumers. Organizations from which the companies purchased information, and schools to which they sold the data, also lodged complaints, claiming that Day Pacer and EduTrek engaged in illegal or unethical practices. Finally, in April 2016, the Commission notified the

companies that it was investigating their activities for possible violations of the FTC Act.

Raymond Fitzgerald and David Cumming, who served as managing members, were equity owners of both companies. As managing members, they had control over the businesses' activities, and were empowered to "do and perform all other acts as may be necessary or appropriate to the conduct of the [entities'] business."

Ian Fitzgerald was involved with Day Pacer and EduTrek in various capacities throughout the years.¹ He was the director of human resources at EduTrek and then became the president of Day Pacer in June 2016. This latter role gave him control over the entity's business and personnel decisions. He continued to serve as Day Pacer's president until that company dissolved in 2019.

In March 2019, the Commission sued the companies, Day Pacer and EduTrek, and the above-named individuals, alleging two counts. Count I asserted the defendants personally called, or caused others to call, consumers on the registry, violating the TSR. *See* 16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(iii). Count II alleged the defendants provided "substantial assistance" to the IBT Partners, who themselves violated the TSR. *See id.* § 310.3(b). The Commission sought monetary and injunctive relief.

All parties moved for summary judgment. The district court issued a written opinion and order in which it first addressed a procedural issue that arose during motion practice. Cumming had passed away in early 2022, so the Commission sought to substitute his estate as a party.

¹ Because Raymond and Ian share a last name, we refer to them by their first names.

Our circuit permits substitution if the action is primarily remedial, rather than penal. *See Smith v. No. 2 Galesburg Crown Fin. Corp.*, 615 F.2d 407, 413-15 (7th Cir. 1980), *overruled on other grounds by Pridegon v. Gates Credit Union*, 683 F.2d 182, 194 (7th Cir. 1982). The district court found that the penalties sought under the TSR were remedial, so it substituted the Estate for Cumming.

The court next found Day Pacer and EduTrek (“LLC Defendants”) liable for calls made to consumers on the registry. It rejected three main arguments against liability. The LLC Defendants first argued they never actually sold anything to consumers, instead acting as mere intermediaries. Thus, they claimed they were not “telemarketers” under the TSR. But the court found that the TSR defines telemarketing more broadly as any “plan, program, or campaign” “conducted to induce the purchase of goods or services,” which described the companies’ activities. *See* 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(hh).

Second, the LLC Defendants asserted they did not have “knowledge fairly implied on the basis of objective circumstances” that the TSR prohibited their activities. *See* 15 U.S.C. § 45(m)(1)(A). But the court found that even if the companies did not subjectively know the TSR applied, there was no reasonable basis for them not to know its applicability—especially considering they knew an analogous statute governed. Third, the LLC Defendants contended they had received prior express consent from consumers to be called. The court responded that consent given to vendors from whom the companies purchased the information was not sufficient; consumers must consent to

each separate caller. Additionally, consumer consent after the call was placed was too late, as callers must have written consent before placing the call.

The court also found the companies liable under Count II, for “substantially assisting” one of its IBT Partners in violating the TSR. Although there were multiple IBT Partners, the Commission sought summary judgment as to only one, as it needed to prove just a single instance to prevail on Count II.

The last liability issue concerned Raymond, Ian, and Cumming (“Individual Defendants”). To hold them liable for the companies’ actions, the Commission was required to demonstrate these individuals had control or authority to control the practices, and that they knew or should have known about the violations. Given the authoritative positions each individual had and their knowledge of the multiple complaints the companies received, the district court found these elements were satisfied.

The court next addressed relief. It said it was “inclined” to grant injunctive relief against the LLC Defendants, as well as Raymond and Ian (“Day Pacer Defendants”), but required supplemental briefing on each party’s current state of affairs. It also expressed an “inclination” to award a \$28.6 million penalty—representing the companies’ gross revenue from the period of malfeasance—against all defendants. But it reserved the final award for after the parties provided updated information. And because Cumming was deceased, the court concluded he had no ongoing role in the affairs of the LLC Defendants and intended to deny injunctive relief as to the Estate.

A few months later, the court issued a permanent injunction prohibiting the Day Pacer Defendants from engaging in any telemarketing, whether or not prohibited by the TSR. It then stayed the injunction pending appeal only to the extent that it prohibited them from calling other businesses. Finally, the court issued a four-page order imposing the full \$28.6 million penalty, with joint and several liability, on all defendants. The order was silent as to a few of the required statutory factors, most notably the parties' ability to pay. *See* 15 U.S.C. § 45(m)(1)(C).

II

The defendants bring two challenges to the district court's liability finding. First, the LLC Defendants argue that the court improperly granted summary judgment against the companies. Second, they posit that even if the LLC Defendants were liable for the telemarketing calls, the court still erred in holding all three Individual Defendants liable for the companies' actions.

Both liability challenges are reviewed de novo, "construing the evidence in the light most favorable to the non-moving parties." *Navratil v. City of Racine*, 101 F.4th 511, 518 (7th Cir. 2024). Summary judgment is appropriate when "there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law." FED. R. CIV. P. 56(a).

A

The LLC Defendants raise three main arguments as to why the companies were not liable for the calls. They first assert the TSR did not prohibit their activities, as the calls were "purely informational." Second, they believe there was still a genuine issue of material fact whether the

companies knew or should have known that the TSR outlawed their calls. Third, they claim that the companies telemarketed only to individuals who had consented to the calls. We address each argument in turn.

The companies were not telemarketing at all, they assert, as their calls were “purely informational.” They did not offer to sell any goods or services to the do-not-call consumers directly. But, as the Commission points out, the regulation’s definition of “telemarketing” is not so limited. Rather, a party violates the regulation any time it is involved in “a plan, program, or campaign which is conducted to induce the purchase of goods or services.” 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(hh). Even though the companies never sold educational services on the contested calls, their business models were structured around a “plan” to obtain caller information to sell to for-profit universities, who would then attempt to sell educational services.

Consider the possible consequence of the LLC Defendants’ reading of the regulations: Nothing would stop a company from establishing a sister organization to generate its leads from do-not-call individuals. That lead-generation organization would be able to obtain the necessary express consent for the principal organization to then place telemarketing calls. But the regulations do not permit such a loophole. Instead, they define “telemarketing” more broadly than just the act of selling goods or services.

The companies argue next that they did not know, and had no reason to know, that the TSR prohibited their calls. The Commission counters that actual knowledge is not needed, as the statute only requires knowledge under an objective standard.

Subjective knowledge that actions violate the TSR is not necessary for liability to attach. Rather, it is enough to have “actual knowledge or knowledge fairly implied on the basis of objective circumstances that such act is unfair or deceptive and is prohibited by such rule.” 15 U.S.C. § 45(m)(1)(A). The LLC Defendants point to three pieces of evidence they say show the companies did not have the requisite knowledge. None of the three are persuasive.

Ian and Raymond asserted in declarations they believed that selling services directly over the phone would violate the TSR, but serving as an intermediary for educational institutions would not. Their beliefs may show the companies did not have actual knowledge of wrongdoing. But it is not objectively reasonable merely to believe that a law does not prohibit their activities. Ignorance of the law’s reach is not a defense.

Cumming posited in an affidavit that he “did some research” on the TSR’s applicability to the companies’ activities, ultimately concluding that the law did not prohibit the calls made. But that research was not proffered during the summary judgment proceedings. Although a party’s affidavit can serve as a vehicle for introducing facts at summary judgment, the party “cannot rest ‘upon conclusory statements in affidavits; [he] must go beyond the pleadings and support [his] contentions with proper documentary evidence.’” *Foster v. PNC Bank, Nat’l Ass’n*, 52 F.4th 315, 320 (7th Cir. 2022) (quoting *Weaver v. Champion Petfoods USA Inc.*, 3 F.4th 927, 934 (7th Cir. 2021)). Because Cumming did not cite any documentary evidence for summary judgment, the assertion in his affidavit was not entitled to any weight.

One evidentiary matter remains bearing on the companies' objective knowledge. That concerns Ian and Raymond's affidavit statements that the Utah Division of Consumer Protection investigated Day Pacer for violating a Utah law similar to the TSR. They submit that the state ultimately did not find Day Pacer in violation of that law. If the state had cleared Day Pacer of wrongdoing under a law materially similar to the TSR, that may have made it objectively reasonable to conclude there was no violation of federal law. But this dispute fails for the same reason as Cumming's research: no evidence related to the Utah investigation was introduced at summary judgment. The district court was not bound to accept bare statements in affidavits unsupported by "proper documentary evidence." *Weaver*, 3 F.4th at 934.

In contrast, the Commission produced admissible evidence demonstrating that it was not objectively reasonable for the LLC Defendants to believe that the TSR did not prohibit their calls. One of EduTrek's 2014 contracts expressly prohibited its contractors from violating the TSR, showing that defendants were aware of the law and its potential applicability. The Individual Defendants also admitted they knew that the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA) and its accompanying regulations governed their activities. *See* 47 U.S.C. § 227. The defendants offered no explanation for how it was reasonable to conclude the TCPA applied to their businesses, yet the essentially equivalent TSR did not.²

² The TCPA prohibits "the initiation of a telephone call or message for the purpose of encouraging the purchase or rental of, or investment in, property, goods, or services, which is transmitted to any per-

In sum, although the defendants may have survived summary judgment on whether they had actual knowledge of TSR violations, they were not entitled to proceed to trial given the statute’s objective standard here.

The last argument against the LLC Defendants’ liability is that the companies limited any telemarketing to consumers who solicited or consented to the calls. The Commission responds that the companies did not obtain the form of consent required by the regulation.

The TSR requires “express agreement, in writing” from any consenting consumer. 16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B)(1). But that agreement does not provide carte blanche for all telemarketers to then call that consumer. Rather, the agreement only authorizes “calls made by or on behalf of a specific party” named in the agreement. *Id.* The defendants argue this exception was met in two ways.

First, they submit that the consumers provided consent to the websites from which the defendants purchased the consumers’ information, and that this consent was broad enough to apply to the defendants. In support, they contend the companies provided millions of URLs purporting to document consent. The Commission responds that when it tested the URLs, they either led to a blank

son.” 47 U.S.C. § 227(a)(4). It is hard to see how there is not significant overlap with the TSR’s prohibition against any “plan, program, or campaign which is conducted to induce the purchase of goods or services or a charitable contribution.” 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(hh).

webpage, or did not demonstrate consent as to the companies.³ It then alerted the defendants in its proposed statement of material facts of the problems with the URLs. The defendants disputed that the URLs were broken and faulted the Commission for not using a certain method to retrieve the webpages. But even after being put on notice of the problems with the links, the defendants provided no evidence—via screenshots, PDFs, or the like—proving consumer consent. They thus did not meet their burden of demonstrating express written agreement.

For the second consent argument, the defendants assert that consumers acquiesced after initially speaking to the companies. But consent can be proved only by “express agreement, in writing.” 16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B)(1). Therefore, under the plain text of the regulation, oral consent does not qualify. The district court correctly concluded that the defendants did not have consumer consent to place the calls.

Related to consent, the LLC Defendants argue that the Commission did not adequately show the companies had knowledge that they lacked consumer consent. But that puts a burden on the FTC where one does not exist. The TSR requires the telemarketer, not the Commission, to “demonstrate that the seller has obtained” express con-

³ The Commission says it tested 750 of the 11,308,260 links provided, and all 750 were defective. It then provided a declaration in which its expert explained that 750 is a proper sample size from which to extrapolate these results to the rest of the population. Defendants argue that extrapolation was impermissible—why, they do not say—but put on no evidence to support that claim.

sent. 16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B)(1). And express consent in the telemarketing context is “an affirmative defense for which the defendant bears the burden of proof.” *Wakefield v. ViSalus, Inc.*, 51 F.4th 1109, 1118-19 (9th Cir. 2022) (interpreting the similar consent provision of the TCPA). Thus, that the Commission could only “point to a handful of complaints” is irrelevant. The LLC Defendants had the burden to establish express consent, and as shown above, they did not carry it here.

Although no party raised this issue on appeal, an additional topic related to the companies’ liability arose at oral argument. The district court found the entities liable for the millions of “outbound telephone calls” they placed to consumers. The TSR defines an “outbound telephone call” as one “initiated by a telemarketer to induce the purchase of goods or services or to solicit a charitable contribution.” 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(x). Because this provision lacks the broad “plan, program, or campaign” language present in the general telemarketing provision, one could argue that an outbound telephone call is illegal only if that call itself induces the purchase of a good or service.

But this reading does not carry the day for the LLC Defendants in this case. As discussed previously, telemarketing is defined broadly as “a plan, program, or campaign which is conducted to induce the purchase of goods or services.” *Id.* § 310.2(hh). And a telemarketer is one “who, in connection with telemarketing, initiates or receives telephone calls to or from a customer.” *Id.* § 310.2(gg). One thus qualifies as a telemarketer any time he calls a customer within the broad definition of telemarketing. Throughout the TSR, the phrases “outbound tel-

ephone call” and “telemarketer” are used in the same sentence, and by referencing telemarketing—a term defined in the regulation—those references incorporate that definition.

In addition, the regulations differentiate a seller—who “provides, offers to provide, or arranges for others to provide goods or services to the customer in exchange for consideration”—from a telemarketer. *Id.* § 310.2(ee). The latter is defined more broadly as one who engages in a “plan, program, or campaign” to induce the purchase of services. *Id.* § 310.2(gg). If the TSR had wanted to limit liability for outbound calls only to calls that actually offer to sell services, it could have defined outbound calls as those placed by sellers, not by the more broadly defined telemarketers. When considering that the regulation prohibits outbound calls placed by telemarketers, not just sellers, we are satisfied that it does not permit calls by lead generators such as Day Pacer and EduTrek.

B

The defendants argue that even if the companies were liable for TSR violations, the individuals were not. To impose individual liability for an entity’s TSR violations, the Commission “must prove (1) that the practice violated the [FTC Act]; (2) that the individual ‘either participated directly in the deceptive acts or practices or had authority to control them’; and (3) that the individual ‘knew or should have known about the deceptive practices.’” *F.T.C. v. Credit Bureau Ctr., LLC*, 937 F.3d 764, 769 (7th Cir. 2019) (quoting *F.T.C. v. World Media Brokers*, 415 F.3d 758, 764 (7th Cir. 2005)). The first element is not addressed here, as that was satisfied in holding the companies liable.

For the second element, Raymond and Cumming's Estate dispute the degree of actual control the individuals exercised over the companies' decisions. Although our circuit has not dealt in depth with the "authority to control" element, the Second Circuit's recent analysis is instructive. In *F.T.C. v. Moses*, the court held an individual liable for entities' deceptive practices when he "held a 50 percent ownership stake" in them, and "served as their co-director and general manager." 913 F.3d 297, 307 (2d Cir. 2019). Important to this liability finding was that the individual "admitted to having the power to hire and reprimand employees including those responsible for the Corporate Defendants' violations." *Id.* So, although there may have been a dispute about "whether he *exercised* authority to control the Corporate Defendants' conduct," there was no legitimate basis to deny that "he *possessed* authority to control it." *Id.* at 308.

So too here. Raymond and Cumming were the largest equity owners of both EduTrek and Day Pacer. For EduTrek, Raymond held a 72% interest and Cumming 21%. For Day Pacer, Raymond held a 66% interest and Cumming 19.5%. Even though Cumming's ownership interest fell short of that of a "controlling shareholder," it is undisputed that he and Raymond were managers of both companies. Managers were entitled to "do and perform all . . . acts as may be necessary or appropriate to the conduct of the [companies'] business." These broad powers necessarily include "the power to hire and reprimand employees including those responsible for the Corporate Defendants' violations." *Moses*, 913 F.3d at 307. Accordingly, even if there was a genuine dispute over whether Raymond and Cumming exercised authority over the

companies' deceptive practices, the record undercuts a claim that they did not possess authority over them.

The defendants also dispute that Raymond and Cumming should have known about the entities' deceptive practices. But both were aware that the companies had been sued multiple times for calling consumers on the registry. It strains credulity that "only a handful of complaints" were insufficient to put them on notice of possible TSR violations. That position is further belied by Raymond's representation of the entities in the lawsuits. There is also no dispute that both individuals were aware of non-lawsuit complaints filed against the companies due to calling numbers on the registry. The record thus shows that Raymond and Cumming knew, or at least should have known, of the companies' deceptive actions. So, the district court correctly held them individually liable.

As an aside, the Estate also argues that the district court should have allowed it to remedy Cumming's litigation errors before ruling in the Commission's favor at summary judgment. Precedent forecloses this argument. When a party is substituted for a deceased person under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 25(a), the new party "tracks the positions of the original litigant[]." *Brook, Weiner, Sereb, Kreger & Weinberg v. Coreq, Inc.*, 53 F.3d 851, 852 (7th Cir. 1995). Specifically, if the deceased party "failed to comply with its discovery obligations, leading the judge to deem a critical fact established," the successor has no right to change that decision. *Id.* The Estate was not entitled to a second bite at the apple.

Now to Ian Fitzgerald. He argues that 61% of the violations occurred from March 22, 2014, to July 31, 2016,

but he had no authority to control the Corporate Defendants' operations before June 2016. The Commission responds that, beginning in 2010, Ian was the president of Raymond's holding company that owned EduTrek and Day Pacer. It also points out that Ian was subjectively aware of complaints the companies received.

There is little argument against Ian's liability for Day Pacer's calls after he became president of the company in June 2016. As a corporate officer, he had authority to control Day Pacer's decisions. *See World Media Brokers*, 415 F.3d at 764 (authority to control can be shown by "assuming duties as a corporate officer"). He also disputes that he should have known about Day Pacer's deceptive practices. But it is undisputed that the company received complaints, including lawsuits, from consumers on the registry after Ian became president. And the company was notified multiple times by vendors of practices that the vendors flagged as illegal. Thus, even if Ian did not subjectively know about all these complaints, a president of a telemarketing business should know of these lawsuits and violations, which is all that is needed to meet the objective knowledge requirement.

As to the companies' activities before Ian became president, however, the Commission did not demonstrate that he had authority to control the entities' actions. Again, there is no genuine dispute that Ian did not "kn[o]w . . . about the deceptive practices." *Credit Bureau Ctr.*, 937 F.3d at 769. In response to a 2015 lawsuit filed by a do-not-call consumer against EduTrek, Ian told other employees in an email that "[w]e need to make sure our system is not calling DNC numbers ever."

Yet even with this email, there is no evidence that Ian had authority to direct the companies' actions before he became president in June 2016. Before then, the Commission agrees, he served as director of human resources for the two entities. No evidence was put forth showing how a human resources role would provide Ian control over the companies' decisions on legal compliance. The Commission submits that Ian should be liable as president of Raymond's holding company, which itself owned an interest in the entities. But serving as the holding company's president is one step removed from being a shareholder in its subsidiaries. So, there is no "substantial inference" that Ian could control the deceptive acts. *F.T.C. v. Freecom Commc'ns, Inc.*, 401 F.3d 1192, 1205 (10th Cir. 2005). There is no evidence that Ian took over Raymond's voting powers, nor that he had any direct say in the entities' operations. The Commission therefore failed to carry its burden of demonstrating that Ian "participated directly in the deceptive acts or practices or had authority to control them." *Credit Bureau Ctr.*, 937 F.3d at 769 (quoting *World Media Brokers*, 415 F.3d at 764).

Last, the Commission contends that Ian's pre-2016 liability stems from his equity ownership in Day Pacer, which was established in September 2015. Ian owned a 9.5% interest in the entity through his limited liability company. This ownership interest is not "controlling," so in isolation falls short of creating a "substantial inference" that the owner has authority to control the entity's decisionmaking. See *Freecom*, 401 F.3d at 1205. And unlike Raymond and Cumming, he was not designated as a manager of the entity, so his powers did not include hiring and reprimanding those responsible for TSR violations. In sum, Ian's equity ownership of Day Pacer does not

demonstrate authority to control its decisions. He is thus only personally liable for the entity's actions after he assumed an officer position.

III

The Estate argues next that even if Cumming was individually liable for the companies' TSR violations, the district court improperly substituted it into the litigation upon his death. *See* FED. R. CIV. P. 25(a). The Commission responds that the Estate was properly substituted in as a party.

We review the district court's substitution decision de novo for legal issues, while factual findings are reviewed for clear error. *Russell v. City of Milwaukee*, 338 F.3d 662, 665 (7th Cir. 2003).

Our circuit holds that "actions for penalties do not survive" a party's death, yet remedial actions do. *Smith v. No. 2 Galesburg Crown Fin. Corp.*, 615 F.2d 407, 414-15 (7th Cir. 1980), *overruled on other grounds by Pridegon v. Gates Credit Union*, 683 F.2d 182, 194 (7th Cir. 1982); *see also Parchman v. SLM Corp.*, 896 F.3d 728, 738 (6th Cir. 2018) (same). The distinction between penal versus remedial turns on three factors: "(1) whether the purpose of the action is to redress individual wrongs or wrongs to the public; (2) whether recovery runs to the individual or to the public; (3) whether the authorized recovery is wholly disproportionate to the harm suffered." *Smith*, 615 F.2d at 414; *Parchman*, 896 F.3d at 738.

First, the Commission asserts that the purpose of the action is safeguarding individual rights, not protecting the public as a whole. The Estate argues that the focus must be on the specific enforcement action, rather than the

statutory scheme writ large. And, the Estate continues, this action was brought primarily to redress wrongs to the public. The Estate relies on *Smith* for its view, but that decision did not take such a narrow approach. Rather, *Smith* expressly considered the “statutory scheme” and “the entire focus of the legislation.” 615 F.2d at 414.

The Sixth Circuit’s analysis in *Parchman* on this score is instructive, as it dealt with the analogous TCPA.⁴ See 47 U.S.C. § 227. That circuit held that the TCPA’s purpose, as clarified in express congressional findings, was to “protect individuals from the harassment, invasion of privacy, inconvenience, nuisance, and other harms associated with unsolicited, automated calls.” 896 F.3d at 738. Simply because “the harm is widely shared does not mean it is a general public wrong.” *Id.* at 739. Rather, the harms are “felt by identifiable individuals, as individuals.” *Id.* And our circuit, when deciding how broadly to construe the TCPA in favor of consumers, has joined other circuits in describing the statute as remedial due to its emphasis on consumer protection. *Physicians Healthsource, Inc. v. A-S Medication Sols., LLC*, 950 F.3d 959, 967 (7th Cir. 2020); *Gager v. Dell Fin. Servs., LLC*, 727 F.3d 265, 271 (3d Cir. 2013); *Physicians Healthsource*,

⁴ As discussed above, the TSR and TCPA prohibit many of the same telemarketing activities. See *supra* note 2. The TCPA makes illegal any communications to consumers on the registry “for the purpose of encouraging the purchase or rental of, or investment in, property, goods, or services,” while the TSR forbids any “plan, program, or campaign which is conducted to induce the purchase of goods or services.” 47 U.S.C. § 227(a)(4); 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(hh). Due to this overlap, TCPA cases may be persuasive in the TSR context, at least in discerning the statute’s overarching purpose—the aim of the first *Smith* for.

Inc. v. Boehringer Ingelheim Pharms., Inc., 847 F.3d 92, 96 (2d Cir. 2017).

So too here, the congressional findings behind the TSR state that consumers “are estimated to lose \$40 billion a year in telemarketing fraud,” and that “consumers are victimized by other forms of telemarketing deception and abuse.” 15 U.S.C. § 6101(3)-(4).⁵ Responding to these concerns, Congress enacted “legislation that will offer consumers necessary protection from telemarketing deception and abuse.” *Id.* § 6101(5). These congressional findings show the TSR was promulgated with the same consumer-centric focus as the TCPA. This factor thus cuts in favor of finding this action remedial.

Second, the Estate and the Commission agree that the recovery here flows to the government, which points toward finding the action penal, not remedial. *See Smith*, 615 F.2d at 414; *Parchman*, 896 F.3d at 740.

Third, *Smith* provides that an action is likely penal when its authorized recovery is greatly disproportionate to the harm inflicted. 615 F.2d at 414. The core dispute here is around the term “authorized.” The Estate argues that the authorized penalty is the statutory maximum, over \$107 billion. This represents the maximum per-violation penalty, multiplied by nearly 4.2 million illegal calls. The Commission responds that the statute requires the court to consider various factors in imposing the penalty,

⁵ The Commission promulgated the TSR to carry out 15 U.S.C. §§ 6101-6108. *See* 16 C.F.R. § 310.1 (identifying the statutory source of the TSR).

so it cannot just automatically award the statutory maximum. Instead, it submits that we should look only to the award the district court fashioned.

But the Commission's assertion is incorrect. *Smith* borrowed its three-part test from a Sixth Circuit case with the same factors. See 615 F.2d at 414 (citing *Murphy v. Household Fin. Corp.*, 560 F.2d 206, 209 (6th Cir. 1977)). And *Murphy*'s third prong was "whether the recovery authorized by the statute is wholly disproportionate to the harm suffered." 560 F.2d at 209 (emphasis added). Further, the Supreme Court case *Murphy* relied on discussed "[p]enal laws," not just penal awards. See *Huntington v. Attrill*, 146 U.S. 657, 667-68 (1892). We must therefore look to the recovery authorized by the statute in discerning whether the action is remedial or penal, not simply the ultimate award.

The Commission is correct, however, that at least for this statute, we cannot consider only the statutory maximum. The district court is not permitted to award that maximum in all instances. Rather, it must consider all statutory factors when fashioning its award. See 15 U.S.C. § 45(m)(1)(C). So, if it reflexively awarded only the maximum, such an award would not be "authorized." A court is "authorized" to act only if it has "official permission" or "formal approval." OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY (3d ed. 2014); see also *WEC Carolina Energy Sols. LLC v. Miller*, 687 F.3d 199, 204 (4th Cir. 2012) (defining "authorization" as "formal warrant, or sanction"). The court does not have "official permission" or "sanction" to award the statutory maximum in all cases, without adjusting that award as the statutory factors require. Doing so would constitute an abuse of discretion.

The statutory maximum cannot be the only consideration. Yet, when read in light of other provisions in the FTC Act, under § 45(m) the district court may grant an award that is not tied to any underlying harm. *See Maracich v. Spears*, 570 U.S. 48, 65-68 (2013) (instructing that statutory provisions should “be construed within the context of the [Act] as a whole”). Section 57b allows courts to “grant such relief as the court finds necessary to redress injury to consumers or other” parties injured by deceptive practices. 15 U.S.C. § 57b(b). But this provision allows damages only to compensate for concrete harms, barring “the imposition of any exemplary or punitive damages.” *Id.* The damages are only compensatory because this provision is strict liability: plaintiffs can recover regardless of the defendant’s mental state.

To the contrary, § 45(m) imposes a mens rea requirement. The defendant must have “actual knowledge or knowledge fairly implied on the basis of objective circumstances” that he violates the law. *Id.* § 45(m)(1)(A). This knowledge requirement explains why there is no limitation on damages only to “redress injury to consumers.” *See Motorola Sols., Inc. v. Hytera Commc’ns Corp.*, 108 F.4th 458, 496-97 (7th Cir. 2024); *Eisenhour v. County*, 897 F.3d 1272, 1281 (10th Cir. 2018) (discussing the connection between mens rea and punitive damages). Thus, the government is not prohibited from seeking punitive damages, allowing the court to punish each violation with an award in the tens of thousands of dollars. *See* 16 C.F.R. § 1.98. Although the court may not award the statutory maximum in all instances, it is authorized to impose damages “wholly disproportionate to the harm suffered.” *Smith*, 615 F.2d at 414. This factor accordingly cuts in favor of finding the action penal.

In sum, we recognize that the statute's purpose may be remedial. But the recovery flows to the federal treasury and, once § 45(m) is read against other provisions of the FTC Act, it is apparent that the authorized recovery can be disproportionate to any harm. *See* ANTONIN SCALIA & BRYAN A. GARNER, *READING LAW: THE INTERPRETATION OF LEGAL TEXTS* 167-69 (2012) (discussing the need to construe a statute as a whole). These two factors demonstrate that the action is penal. Under *Smith*, the district court's damages award did not survive Cumming's death, so the Estate was improperly substituted.

IV

The defendants challenge the district court's damages award in three ways. First, they assert the \$28 million civil penalty was excessive, as it is grossly disproportionate to any harm suffered from the telemarketing calls. They also claim the court's calculation was procedurally improper, as it did not consider required statutory factors. The Commission counters by arguing the court did not abuse its discretion in determining the award.

Second, the defendants take issue with the district court's decision to make the award joint and several. They argue that the award instead should have been assessed against each individual. The Commission responds that the district court already performed an individualized assessment at the liability phase, so it did not need a second analysis at the penalty stage. Third, the Day Pacer Defendants claim the district court improperly considered all transfers made by IBT Partners in fashioning its award, despite only making factual findings as to one of them. The Commission responds the transferred calls were

properly considered, and even if not, they made an immaterial difference in the court’s award.

A

Our court reviews the district court’s civil penalty award for abuse of discretion. *S.E.C. v. Williky*, 942 F.3d 389, 393 (7th Cir. 2019). Reversal if proper only if “the record contains no evidence upon which the court could have rationally based its decision; the decision is based on an erroneous conclusion of law; the decision is based on clearly erroneous factual findings; or the decision clearly appears arbitrary.” *Id.* (quoting *United States v. Z Inv. Props., LLC*, 921 F.3d 696, 698 (7th Cir. 2019)).

The defendants first argue the district court erred by imposing a penalty equal to gross income, rather than basing it on harm inflicted. We disagree. Our court dealt with a similar issue in *United States v. Dish Network L.L.C.*, 954 F.3d 970 (7th Cir. 2020). There, DISH violated the TSR, the TCPA, and a host of similar state laws for contacting do-not-call consumers. *Id.* at 973. The district court awarded \$280 million in damages against DISH, which represented 20% of the company’s annual profits. *Id.* at 980. We ruled that this award was impermissible, as it was based “entirely on DISH’s ability to pay.” *Id.* Some of the statutes at issue there—the TCPA and certain state laws—did not list “ability to pay as even a permissible factor,” so the damages issue was remanded for further consideration. *Id.* Our court cautioned that, even under statutes that permit considering defendants’ ability to pay, to ensure any penalty is “within a constitutionally allowable range . . . the best way to do this is to start from harm rather than wealth,” adjusting that number as the district court sees fit. *Id.*

In *Dish*, our court said that the legal system typically “bases civil damages and penalties on harm done.” *Id.* But it pointed out that lawmakers “can change this norm,” usually by permitting courts to consider other factors. *Id.* That is precisely what § 45(m) did. When fashioning an award, the court must consider four mandatory factors, none of which is consumer harm. 15 U.S.C. § 45(m)(1)(C). As discussed above, *see supra* Section III, the provision’s punitive nature means the court is not limited to fashioning an award only to compensate for demonstrable harm. A different section of the FTC Act accomplishes that. *Id.* § 57b(b).⁶ Rather, the section at issue here was meant to impose a greater punishment on violators who had knowledge—either “actual” or “fairly implied”—of their wrongdoing. *Id.* § 45(m)(1)(A).⁷

To be sure, *Dish* held that the FTC Act does not permit the defendant’s wealth “to be the sole factor” in fashioning an award. 954 F.3d at 980. This is true, as § 45(m) directs the court to consider numerous other ones. That leads us to the defendants’ second challenge to the award:

⁶ This section directs courts to fashion an award that is “necessary to redress injury to consumers or other persons, partnerships, and corporations resulting from the rule violation or the unfair or deceptive act or practice.” 15 U.S.C. § 57b(b). To the contrary, § 45(m) does not contain any language limiting awards to consumer redress.

⁷ The defendants’ argument that the district court’s award conflicts with *AMG Capital Management, LLC v. FTC*, 141 S. Ct. 1341 (2021), is misplaced. That case held that the FTC Act’s provision authorizing injunctive relief does not allow a court to award equitable monetary relief. *Id.* at 1347 (citing 15 U.S.C. § 53(b)). It did not address whether disgorgement would be proper under the provision at issue here, § 45(m).

that the district court did not consider all mandatory factors. Section 45(m)(1)(C) requires the court to consider “degree of culpability, any history of prior such conduct, ability to pay, effect on ability to continue to do business, and such other matters as justice may require.” When statutes mandate consideration of factors, a district court must “sufficiently explain its decision to show us that it considered” them. *Patton v. MFS/Sun Life Fin. Distribs., Inc.*, 480 F.3d 478, 490 (7th Cir. 2007). “A rote statement that the judge considered all relevant factors will not always suffice.” *United States v. Cunningham*, 429 F.3d 673, 679 (7th Cir. 2005).

In its initial summary judgment order, the court requested additional briefing on the defendants’ ability to pay, as well as “the effect any penalty would have on” the entities’ ability to continue to do business. The Estate filed a brief that included a section discussing its ability to pay and its assets, which all other defendants “joined.” Although the non-Estate defendants did not divulge their assets in this round of briefing, the district court could have considered their financial estimates provided earlier in the litigation. But in its \$28.6 million damages award order, the district court did not discuss the defendants’ ability to pay. Nor did it address their financial whereabouts elsewhere in the record.

The court also did not make any findings as to the companies’ ability to do business. While Raymond asserted that Day Pacer is no longer in operation, the Commission noted that the entity still had an active corporate registration. If Day Pacer was truly non-operational, the district court did not need to dwell on this factor. But because the record is silent as to its status, we do not know whether

that factor should have played a larger role in the damages award calculation. That these two factors are missing makes it impossible to conclude the district court “considered the relevant factors,” *Patton*, 480 F.3d at 490, and was an abuse of discretion.

Third, the Day Pacer Defendants submit that the district court improperly considered all calls placed by the IBT Partners when fashioning its award, even though it made express findings only as to one, Bluewater. The companies themselves were responsible for 3,669,914 illegal calls, while the IBT Partners transferred another 498,597 illegal calls to the LLCs. But there were dozens of IBT Partners, with Bluewater accounting for only a small fraction of those nearly half-million illegal calls.

The district court imputed all IBT Partners’ illegal calls to the defendants for purposes of calculating the award, despite making factual findings only as to Bluewater. But the defendants cannot be held liable for actions on which the district court did not make findings. On remand, the district court should consider solely the companies’ 3,669,914 calls, as well as Bluewater’s share of the 498,597 inbound transfer calls.

We do not take a position on whether the dollar amount of the award, standing alone, constituted an abuse of discretion. Rather, we hold only that the district court abused its discretion in the procedures used to arrive at the award.

B

The defendants assert the district court erred in imposing joint and several liability, rather than performing an individualized assessment for each defendant. The

Commission responds that the district court already performed an individualized assessment at the liability phase, so it did not need a second analysis at the penalty stage.

The defendants' argument runs headlong into our precedent. This court has repeatedly held individuals jointly and severally liable without undertaking individual § 45(m) analyses for each defendant. *See World Media Brokers*, 415 F.3d at 763-66; *F.T.C. v. Bay Area Bus. Council, Inc.*, 423 F.3d 627, 632, 635-38 (7th Cir. 2005). Joint and several liability is appropriate whenever a plaintiff can "establish that each defendant acted in concert to 'produce a single, indivisible injury.'" *Harper v. Albert*, 400 F.3d 1052, 1061-62 (7th Cir. 2005) (quoting *Watts v. Laurent*, 774 F.2d 168, 179 (7th Cir. 1985)). And defendants act in concert when there exists an "agreement to cooperate in a particular line of conduct or to accomplish a particular result." RESTATEMENT (SECOND) OF TORTS § 876 cmt. a. If multiple defendants "jointly cause harm, each defendant is held liable for the entire amount of the harm; provided, however, that the plaintiff recover only once for the full amount." *Honeycutt v. United States*, 581 U.S. 443, 447-48 (2017).

Here, each injury—communication to a do-not-call consumer—is indivisible as to each defendant. And as established when holding each individual liable for the companies' actions, Raymond and Ian cooperated to achieve each injury. They were on extensive email chains with one another, discussed complaints against the companies together, and formulated business plans together. Accordingly, the district court appropriately imposed joint and

several liability on Ian and Raymond after finding them individually liable for the entities' acts.⁸

Although joint and several liability is appropriate when the injury is indivisible, as discussed in Section II.B, Ian is not liable for calls placed before he became president of Day Pacer. The Commission has shown it has data available to determine when all calls occurred. As such, the district court should review that information and impose liability for pre-June 2016 TSR violations solely on the entities and Raymond.

V

The Day Pacer Defendants assert that the district court's injunction is too broad. The court prohibited them from "participating in Telemarketing or assisting others engaged in Telemarketing, whether directly or through an intermediary." It defined telemarketing as "any plan, program, or campaign which is conducted to induce the purchase of goods or services by use of one or more telephones, and which involves a telephone call, whether or not covered by the Telemarketing Sales Rule."

Instead, the Day Pacer Defendants believe the court should have enjoined them only from (1) calling consumers on the registry and (2) telemarketing calls related to for-profit education companies. They further argue that the injunction as written would interfere with their liveli-

⁸ Cumming also participated, but recall we have concluded that the Estate was improperly substituted. Therefore, the Estate cannot be jointly and severally liable for the award.

hoods. The Commission responds that injunctions are often not limited to preventing the exact harm giving rise to the injunction, but usually sweep in additional activity.

We review the district court’s injunction for abuse of discretion. *S.E.C. v. Yang*, 795 F.3d 674, 681 (7th Cir. 2015). The court has wide latitude in fashioning broad equitable relief. Indeed, it “is not limited to prohibiting the illegal practice in the precise form in which it is found to have existed in the past. . . . [I]t must be allowed effectively to close all roads to the prohibited goal, so that its order may not be by-passed with impunity.” *F.T.C. v. Ruberoid Co.*, 343 U.S. 470, 473 (1952).

The Fourth Circuit recently dealt with a district court order enjoining similar misconduct. The defendant had violated the TSR by fraudulently selling foreign rental properties. *F.T.C. v. Pukke*, 53 F.4th 80, 97-98 (4th Cir. 2022). The district court enjoined him from “any and all telemarketing activity whatsoever,” not just telemarketing violating the TSR. *See In re Sanctuary Belize Litig.*, 482 F. Supp. 3d 373, 469 (D. Md. 2020). The Fourth Circuit affirmed the injunction over an overbreadth challenge, noting that the Commission can “seek injunctions framed ‘broadly enough to prevent [defendants] from engaging in similarly illegal practices in future advertisements.’” *Pukke*, 53 F.4th at 110 (quoting *F.T.C. v. Colgate-Palmolive Co.*, 380 U.S. 374, 395 (1965)).

The district court’s relief here, while broad, was not an abuse of discretion. Given the defendants’ flagrant misconduct—illegally calling millions of registry consumers—a broad injunction was warranted.

Raymond and Ian complain that the injunction improperly restricts their ability to earn a living. For instance, Raymond asserts he is still a partner at a law firm, and the terms of the injunction would prohibit him from selling services to potential clients. Ian points out that he owns a new telemarketing business, but that this business sells goods and services only to other businesses—an activity not prohibited by the TSR. Without question, the district court’s injunction may inhibit the defendants’ ability to earn money legitimately. But that consequence should have been contemplated before placing millions of illegal telemarketing calls.

The district court acted within its wide discretion in prohibiting not only calls that violate the TSR, but also communications that may possibly result in a violation. Indeed, the injunction effectively “close[s] all roads to the prohibited goal,” even if it includes some legal activity. *Ruberoid Co.*, 343 U.S. at 473.

* * *

The judgment of the district court is affirmed, other than its calculation of damages and its decision to substitute the Estate as a party. Those two sections of its summary judgment orders are reversed, and we remand the case for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.

APPENDIX B

[Date Filed: 01/16/2024]

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
EASTERN DIVISION**

Federal Trade
Commission,

Plaintiff,

v.

Day Pacer LLC, et al.

Defendant.

No. 19 CV 1984

Judge Lindsay C.
Jenkins

ORDER

Before the Court is Defendant Margaret Cumming’s memorandum, [Dkt. 301], regarding the amount of civil penalties the Court should award after granting summary judgment in favor of the FTC for Defendants’ violations of the Telemarketing Sales Rule (“TSR”), 16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B), which is promulgated under the Telemarketing Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 6101-6108. Ms. Cumming brings this memorandum in her capacity as the personal representative of the estate (the “Estate”) of David Cumming (“Cumming”), a Defendant who passed away while summary judgment was pending.¹

¹ Despite having no authorization to do so, the remaining Defendants in the action (Day Pacer LLC, Edutrek L.L.C., Ian Fitzgerald and Raymond Fitzgerald) filed a notice joining in the motion. [Dkt. 302.]

In its summary judgment order, the Court held the individual defendants, including Cumming, could be held personally liable for the TSR violations, [Dkt. 280 at 51-56]², and noted that it was inclined to adopt the FTC's proposal for \$28,681,863.88 in penalties over Defendants' arguments. [*Id.* at 60.] The Court came to this conclusion after making several findings regarding Defendants', including Cumming's, knowledge of and culpability in the wrongdoing, as well as the scope of the misconduct, which included millions of calls in violation of the TSR. Before entering judgment, however, the Court decided to hold a hearing to gather "more information about Defendants' ability to pay and the effect any penalty would have on an ability to continue to do business." [*Id.* at 60-61.]

At the hearing, the Estate requested additional time to file a written brief setting out its position on the appropriate civil penalty. The Estate argued it had distinct interests and arguments on remedies separate from Cumming. The Court hesitantly granted the request after receiving assurances that the Estate was not attempting to reopen issues decided in the summary judgment order [*See* Dkt. 291 at 6-24.] Having considered the Estate's brief, [Dkt. 301], and the FTC's response, [Dkt. 305], the Court concludes a civil penalty in the amount of \$28,681,863.88 is appropriate and will enter judgment to that effect.

Because the Court denies the Estate's requested relief, the joinder issue is moot.

² Citations to docket filings generally refer to the electronic pagination provided by CM/ECF, which may not be consistent with page numbers in the underlying documents.

The Estate’s brief makes arguments on several issues—including Cumming’s knowledge of the wrongdoing and overall culpability—that were already decided in the Court’s summary judgment order. [See Dkt. 301 at 5-8.] As the Court made clear at the hearing, this brief was not an invitation for reconsideration, and the Court declines to revisit those findings. The Estate’s arguments regarding its relation to Cumming, as well as its penalty calculation methodologies, however, warrant analysis as they both impact the imposition of civil penalties.

When determining what civil penalty is appropriate for violations of the FTC Act, courts “shall take into account the degree of culpability, any history of prior such conduct, ability to pay, effect on ability to continue to do business, and such other matters as justice may require.” 15 U.S.C. § 45(m)(1)(C). Moreover, courts should “start from harm rather than wealth, then add an appropriate multiplier” to ensure the penalty awarded is constitutionally sound. *United States v. Dish Network L.L.C.*, 954 F.3d 970, 980 (7th Cir. 2020).

As noted above, the Court’s summary judgment order already applied these factors to Cumming. Permeating throughout the Estate’s brief, however, is the notion the Court should apply these factors to the Estate, as opposed to Cumming. [See *e.g.*, Dkt. 301 at 5 (“The Estate (and its constituents) are innocent, and no one says otherwise. This should end the analysis with respect to this [culpability] factor”); *id.* at 7 (“There is no evidence that either the Estate or David engaged in prior misconduct”).] The Estate does not cite to any authority

for why its conduct should be scrutinized as opposed to Cumming's.

This is perhaps because the Estate's argument does not pass legal scrutiny. The Court substituted the Estate as a party under Rule 25(a)(1), finding that Cumming's TSR violations survive his death and should pass to his estate. [Dkt. 280 at 10-22.] A substituted party "tracks the positions of the original litigants", including the "substantive claims" raised or defended by the initial party. *Brook, Weiner, Sered, Kreger & Weinberg v. Coreq, Inc.*, 53 F.3d 851, 852 (7th Cir. 1995); *see also Abellan v. HRDS Le Roy IL, LLC*, 2020 WL 10355049, at *2 (C.D. Ill. June 19, 2020) (under "Rule 25(a)(1), the substituted party steps into the same position as the original party to the action.") In no way does the conduct of a substituted party become relevant or impact the liability of the initial party. If it did, it is hard to imagine how a substituted party could ever be found liable of the underlying claims. This is particularly true for an estate, which does not have the capacity to act.³

Having determined the Estate's conduct is not applicable to assessing the appropriate civil penalty, the Court turns to the Estate's argument that the FTC's methodology for calculating the penalty is flawed, and should be replaced by one of two options supplied by the Estate. [Dkt. 301 at 12-16.] The FTC's proposed penalty

³ The Estate claims that its business is to "fulfill the decedent's wishes and to ensure the decedent's heirs and legatees are provided for." [Dkt. 301 at 8-9.] But as the FTC notes, an estate is required first to pay "all claims entitled to be paid therefrom." [Dkt. 305 at 13.]

of \$28,681,863.88 is derived from the gross revenue the defendant companies earned from the TSR violations, which comes out to \$6.88 per call. [Dkt. 280 at 58.] According to the Estate, this is incorrect because a court should “start from harm” and then add a multiplier when fashioning a civil penalty. *Dish Network*, 954 F.3d at 980. Relying on a law review article, the Estate posits that the harm caused by telemarketing calls is only \$.113 per call. [Dkt. 301 at 4.] Rounding that figure up to \$.12 per call, the Estate argues the harm is \$500,221 (4,168,511 calls x .12) and with a multiplier of 3 equals \$1,500,663. However, because Cumming was not as culpable as other defendants, his (and therefore the Estate’s) portion of the penalty should only be \$150,066. [*Id.* at 15.]

In the alternative, the Estate asks the Court to apply a penalty of \$2.54 per call, which was the rate used by the district court in *Dish Network*. This math, after taking into consideration the multiplier and Cumming’s purported reduced culpability, would equate to \$1,058,802 in penalties for the Estate. [*Id.* at 15-16.]

While the Court appreciates the Estate’s proposals, it disagrees with its interpretation of *Dish Network* to mean that harm should replace the factors proscribed in 15 U.S.C. § 45(m)(1)(C) for fashioning a civil penalty. Rather, the Court reads *Dish Network* to say that the harm with multiplier process is a mechanism to ensure that the given penalty is within constitutionally acceptable limits. *See Dish Network*, 954 F.3d at 980 (“We appreciate that the district judge tried to ensure that the penalty was within a constitutionally allowable range, but the best way to do this is to start from harm rather than wealth, then add an appropriate multiplier.”) Here, the Court declines

to adopt a blanket per call harm of \$.12 based on a single law review article completely divorced from the facts of this case. Likewise, the Court is unpersuaded that the \$2.54 per call harm applied in *Dish Network* has any applicability here.

Conversely, the methodology supplied by the FTC has a reasonable connection to the Section 45 factors—basically, given the scope of Defendants’ TSR violations, their knowledge of those violations, and the high culpability in trying to mask those violations, all revenue from those calls should be forfeited as a civil penalty. This comes out to \$6.88 per call, which is well within range for the difficult-to-quantify harms caused by TSR violations. *Parchman v. SLM Corp.*, 896 F.3d 728, 740 (6th Cir. 2018) (holding \$500 per call is not “wholly disproportionate to the harm suffered as a result of receiving these irritating and invasive calls, especially where the harm is hard to quantify and may vary significantly from person to person.”)

The Court concludes \$28,681,863.88 is the appropriate civil penalty, which applies jointly and severally to all Defendants as decided in the summary judgment order.

Enter: 19-cv-1984

Date: January 16, 2024

[/s/ **Lindsay C. Jenkins**]

Lindsay C. Jenkins

United States District Judge

APPENDIX C**[Date Filed: 11/21/2023]****UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
EASTERN DIVISION****FEDERAL TRADE
COMMISSION,****Plaintiff,****v.****DAY PACER LLC, et al.****Defendants.****Case No. 1: 19-cv-1984****Judge: Lindsay C.
Jenkins****ORDER FOR PERMANENT INJUNCTION AND
OTHER RELIEF**

Plaintiff, the Federal Trade Commission (“Commission”), filed its Complaint for civil penalties, a permanent injunction, and other relief in this matter, pursuant to Sections 5(a), 5(m)(1)(A), 13(b), and 16(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 45(a), 45(m)(1)(A), 53(b), and 56(a)(1), and Section 6 of the Telemarketing and Consumer Fraud and Abuse Prevention Act (the “Telemarketing Act”), 15 U.S.C. § 6105. Plaintiff has moved for summary judgment pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 56 against Defendants Day Pacer LLC, EduTrek L.L.C., Raymond Fitzgerald, David Cumming, and Ian Fitzgerald. Defendant David Cumming died after the parties had fully briefed summary judgment and his estate has been substituted as a defendant. The Court, having considered the

memoranda and exhibits filed in support of Plaintiff's Motion for Summary Judgment, and all other pleadings and filings in this action, granted Plaintiff's motion in part for the reasons set forth in its Memorandum Opinion and Order [Dkt. 280]. The Court held a hearing on remedies on November 8, 2023, and now enters this Order granting injunctive relief. This Order does not impose any injunctive or other relief (including, without limitation, the relief or other requirements under Section II-V hereof) against David Cumming or his estate. Nor does it make any findings with respect to David Cumming or his Estate. The Court will separately enter an Order on civil monetary penalties with respect to all Defendants.

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED as follows:

FINDINGS

1. This Court has jurisdiction over this matter.
2. The Complaint states a claim upon which relief may be granted, charging that Defendants violated Section 5 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45, and the FTC's Telemarketing Sales Rule ("TSR" or "Rule"), as amended, 16 C.F.R. Part 310, in the Telemarketing of vocational training and post-secondary education programs.
3. The Corporate Defendants violated the TSR, 16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B) (**Count I**) by initiating or causing the initiation of outbound telephone calls to consumers whose telephone numbers were on the National Do Not Call Registry ("Registry"). The Corporate Defendants also violated 16 C.F.R. § 310.3(b) (**Count II**) by assisting and facilitating their inbound transfer partners' violations of the TSR.

4. The Corporate Defendants' TSR violations are deemed to constitute unfair or deceptive acts or practices in violation of Section 5 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45.

5. There is no genuine issue of material fact as to any of the Defendants' affirmative defenses, and summary judgment for the FTC is granted as to each of those defenses.

6. Corporate Defendants Day Pacer LLC ("Day Pacer") and EduTrek L.L.C. ("EduTrek") formed a common enterprise. Day Pacer is also a corporate successor to EduTrek. The Corporate Defendants had knowledge that their acts and practices were prohibited by the TSR.

7. The Individual Defendants either participated in the violative acts or practices and/or had authority to control them. The Individual Defendants knew or should have known of the Corporate Defendants' violative acts and practices and knowledge that those acts and practices were prohibited by the TSR.

8. There is a reasonable likelihood that Defendants Day Pacer LLC, EduTrek L.L.C., Raymond Fitzgerald, and Ian Fitzgerald ("Day Pacer Defendants") will engage in future violations absent the injunctive relief requested. Accordingly, it is proper in this case to issue a permanent injunction under Section 13(b) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 53(b) that: a) bans the Day Pacer Defendants from engaging in, or assisting others engage in, telemarketing activities; and b) orders other relief including recordkeeping and compliance monitoring provisions to ensure compliance with this Order.

10. Entry of this Order is in the public interest.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Order, the following definitions apply:

- A. **“Defendants”** for purposes of this Order means all of the Individual Defendants (as defined herein) and the Corporate Defendants, individually, collectively, or in any combination.
- B. **“Corporate Defendants”** means Day Pacer LLC (also d/b/a Edutrek, EdSoup, Our School Search, College Info, Degree Spots, and Insurance Info), Edutrek LLC (also d/b/a EdSoup), and their successors and assigns.
- C. **“Day Pacer Defendants”** means the Corporate Defendants, Raymond Fitzgerald, and Ian Fitzgerald.
- D. **“Individual Defendants”** for purposes of this Order means Raymond Fitzgerald, Ian Fitzgerald, and David Cumming.
- E. **“Telemarketing”** means any plan, program, or campaign which is conducted to induce the purchase of goods or services by use of one or more telephones, and which involves a telephone call, whether or not covered by the Telemarketing Sales Rule.

ORDER

I. BAN ON TELEMARKETING

IT IS ORDERED that the Day Pacer Defendants are permanently restrained and enjoined from participating in Telemarketing or assisting others engaged in Telemarketing, whether directly or through an intermediary.

II. ORDER ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Day Pacer Defendants obtain acknowledgments of receipt of this Order:

A. Each Day Pacer Defendant, within 7 days of entry of this Order, must submit to the Commission an acknowledgment of receipt of this Order sworn under penalty of perjury.

B. For 20 years after entry of this Order, Defendants Raymond Fitzgerald and Ian Fitzgerald for any business that such Defendant, individually or collectively with any other Defendants, is the majority owner or controls directly or indirectly, and each Corporate Defendant, must deliver a copy of this Order to: (1) all principals, officers, directors, and LLC managers and members; (2) all employees, agents and representatives having managerial responsibilities for conduct related to Lead Generation; and (3) any business entity resulting from any change in structure as set forth in the Section titled Compliance Reporting. Delivery must occur within 7 days of entry of this Order for current personnel. For all others, delivery must occur before they assume their responsibilities.

C. From each individual or entity to which a Defendant delivered a copy of this Order, that Defendant must obtain, within 30 days, a signed and dated acknowledgment of receipt of this Order.

III. COMPLIANCE REPORTING

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Day Pacer Defendants make timely submissions to the Commission:

A. One year after entry of this Order, each Day Pacer Defendant must submit a compliance report, sworn under penalty of perjury:

1. Each Day Pacer Defendant must: (a) identify the primary physical, postal, and email address and telephone number, as designated points of contact, which representatives of the Commission may use to communicate with Defendant; (b) identify all of that Defendant's businesses by all of their names, telephone numbers, and physical, postal, email, and Internet addresses; (c) describe the activities of each business, including the goods and services offered, the means of advertising, marketing, and sales, and the involvement of any other Defendant (which Defendants Raymond Fitzgerald and Ian Fitzgerald must describe if they know or should know due to their own involvement); (d) describe in detail whether and how that Defendant is in compliance with each Section of this Order; and (e) provide a copy of each Order Acknowledgment obtained pursuant to this Order, unless previously submitted to the Commission.

2. Additionally, Defendants Raymond Fitzgerald and Ian Fitzgerald must: (a) identify all telephone numbers and all physical, postal, email and Internet addresses, including all residences; (b) identify all business activities, including any business for which such Defendant performs services whether as an employee or otherwise and any entity in which such Defendant has any ownership interest; and (c) describe in detail such Defendant's involvement in each such business, including title,

role, responsibilities, participation, authority, control, and any ownership.

B. For 20 years after entry of this Order, each Day Pacer Defendant must submit a compliance notice, sworn under penalty of perjury, within 14 days of any change in the following: 1. Each Day Pacer Defendant must report any change in: (a) any designated point of contact; or (b) the structure of any Corporate Defendant or any entity that Defendant has any ownership interest in or controls directly or indirectly that may affect compliance obligations arising under this Order, including: creation, merger, sale, or dissolution of the entity or any subsidiary, parent, or affiliate that engages in any acts or practices subject to this Order.

2. Additionally, Defendants Raymond Fitzgerald and Ian Fitzgerald must report any change in: (a) name, including aliases or fictitious name, or residence address; or (b) title or role in any business activity, including any business for which such Defendant performs services whether as an employee or otherwise and any entity in which such Defendant has any ownership interest, and identify the name, physical address, and any Internet address of the business or entity.

C. Each Day Pacer Defendant must submit to the Commission notice of the filing of any bankruptcy petition, insolvency proceeding, or similar proceeding by or against such Defendant within 14 days of its filing.

D. Any submission to the Commission required by this Order to be sworn under penalty of perjury must be true and accurate and comply with 28 U.S.C. § 1746, such as

by concluding: “I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on: _____” and supplying the date, signatory’s full name, title (if applicable), and signature.

E. Unless otherwise directed by a Commission representative in writing, all submissions to the Commission pursuant to this Order must be emailed to DE-brief@ftc.gov or sent by overnight courier (not the U.S. Postal Service) to: Associate Director for Enforcement, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20580. The subject line must begin: FTC v. DAY PACER, X190022.

IV. RECORDKEEPING

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Day Pacer Defendants must create certain records for 20 years after entry of the Order, and retain each such record for 5 years. Specifically, each Corporate Defendant, in connection with Lead Generation, and Defendants Raymond Fitzgerald and Ian Fitzgerald for any business that such Defendant, individually or collectively with any other Defendants, is a majority owner or controls directly or indirectly, must create and retain the following records:

- A. accounting records showing the revenues from all goods or services sold;
- B. personnel records showing, for each person providing services, whether as an employee or otherwise, that person’s: name; addresses; telephone numbers; job title

or position; dates of service; and (if applicable) the reason for termination;

C. records of all consumer complaints and refund requests, whether received directly or indirectly, such as through a third party, and any response;

D. all records necessary to demonstrate full compliance with each provision of this Order, including all submissions to the Commission; and

E. a copy of each unique advertisement or other marketing material.

V. COMPLIANCE MONITORING

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that, for the purpose of monitoring Day Pacer Defendants' compliance with this Order:

A. Within 14 days of receipt of a written request from a representative of the Commission, each Day Pacer Defendant must: submit additional compliance reports or other requested information, which must be sworn under penalty of perjury; appear for depositions; and produce documents for inspection and copying. The Commission is also authorized to obtain discovery, without further leave of court, using any of the procedures prescribed by Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 29, 30 (including telephonic depositions), 31, 33, 34, 36, 45, and 69.

B. For matters concerning this Order, the Commission is authorized to communicate directly with each Day Pacer Defendant. The Day Pacer Defendants must permit representatives of the Commission to interview

any employee or other person affiliated with any Defendant who has agreed to such an interview. The person interviewed may have counsel present.

C. The Commission may use all other lawful means, including posing, through its representatives as consumers, suppliers, or other individuals or entities, to Defendants or any individual or entity affiliated with Defendants, without the necessity of identification or prior notice. Nothing in this Order limits the Commission's lawful use of compulsory process, pursuant to Sections 9 and 20 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 49, 57b-1.

D. Upon written request from a representative of the Commission, any consumer reporting agency must furnish consumer reports concerning Defendants Raymond Fitzgerald and Ian Fitzgerald pursuant to Section 604(1) of the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. §1681b(a)(1).

VI. RETENTION OF JURISDICTION

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this Court retains jurisdiction of this matter for purposes of construction, modification, and enforcement of this Order.

Enter: 19-cv-1984

Date: November 21, 2023

[/s/ **Lindsay C. Jenkins**]

Lindsay C. Jenkins

UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

APPENDIX D

[Date Filed: 09/01/2023]

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
EASTERN DIVISION**

Federal Trade
Commission,

Plaintiff,

v.

Day Pacer LLC, EduTrek
L.L.C., Raymond
Fitzgerald, Ian
Fitzgerald, and David
Cumming,

Defendants.

No. 19 CV 1984

Judge Lindsay C.
Jenkins

MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER

In March 2019, the Federal Trade Commission (“FTC”) filed this consumer-protection action against Day Pacer LLC (“Day Pacer”), a telemarketing company that makes calls to generate consumer leads to sell to for-profit education companies. [Dkt. 1, ¶ 1.] The FTC also brings suit against Day Pacer’s successor in interest, EduTrek L.L.C. (“EduTrek,” and together with Day Pacer, the “LLC Defendants”), and its former President Ian Fitzgerald, managing member Raymond Fitzgerald, and partial owner and manager David Cumming. In Count I, the FTC alleges that Defendants initiated or caused others to initiate telephone calls to phone numbers

on the federal Do Not Call List in violation of the FTC's Telemarketing Sales Rule ("TSR"), 16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B), which is promulgated under the Telemarketing Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 6101-6108. Count I is based on both (1) calls initiated by the LLC Defendants and (2) calls initiated by other telemarketers that were allegedly acting as the LLC Defendants' agents (the "IBT Partners"). Count II alleges that Defendants violated 16 C.F.R. § 310.3(b) by providing substantial assistance and support to the IBT Partners even though Defendants knew or consciously avoided knowing that those telemarketers were calling numbers on the Do Not Call List in violation of the TSR.

The FTC has moved for summary judgment against all Defendants. [See Dkt. 211.] Day Pacer, EduTrek, and the Fitzgeralds oppose summary judgment and have also cross-moved for summary judgment against the FTC. [See Dkt. 227.] Cumming filed a separate opposition to summary judgment and also cross-moved for summary judgment. [See Dkt. 230.] The two sets of Defendants have also adopted one another's summary judgment arguments. [See Dkt. 227 at 58; Dkt. 230 at 6.] Shortly after summary judgment briefing concluded, Cumming passed away. [See Dkt. 244, Statement Noting Party's Death.] The FTC timely filed a motion to substitute the personal representative of Cumming's estate (the "Estate") as a defendant in this action. [See Dkt. 247.] The Estate opposes the motion. [See Dkt. 263.]

For the reasons discussed below, the FTC's motion for substitution [Dkt. 247] is granted. The Estate is substituted as a defendant in this action. The FTC's motion for

summary judgment [Dkt. 211] is granted in part and denied in part. The FTC has demonstrated as a matter of law that Defendants are liable for violating the TSR because the LLC Defendants placed calls to phone numbers on the Do Not Call List (part of Count I). The FTC has not demonstrated as a matter of law that Defendants are liable for calls initiated by the IBT Partners acting as Defendants' agents (the other part of Count I). However, the FTC has also moved for—and is entitled to—summary judgment on its alternative claim in Count II that Defendants have provided substantial assistance and support to at least one other telemarketer while knowing that the telemarketer was calling numbers on the Do Not Call List. Since the FTC is entitled to judgment on only one of its two alternative theories (absent any attempt to analyze the IBT Partners individually), Defendants are entitled to summary judgment on Count I to the extent it is based on calls initiated by IBT Partners.

Given the age of the summary judgment motions and the substitution of the Estate for Mr. Cumming, the Court will require further input from the parties before ordering an appropriate remedy.

I. Introduction

A. Statutory Framework

Section 5 of the FTC Act declares unlawful “[u]nfair methods of competition” and “unfair or deceptive acts or practices” in or affecting commerce. 15 U.S.C. § 45(a)(1). The FTC has authority to prescribe “rules which define with specificity acts or practices which are unfair or deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce,” with certain exceptions that are not applicable here. 15 U.S.C.

§ 57a(a)(1)(B). Once those rules take effect, “a subsequent violation thereof shall constitute an unfair or deceptive act or practice in violation of section 45(a)(1)” 15 U.S.C. § 57a(d)(3). The FTC is empowered to bring actions in federal court to enforce violations of Section 5 of the FTC Act and to seek appropriate equitable relief and civil penalties. *F.T.C. v. Bay Area Bus. Council, Inc.*, 423 F.3d 627, 634-35 (7th Cir. 2005). During the time period relevant here, the maximum statutory recovery for each violation of the FTC Act was between \$16,000 and \$42,530, depending on exactly when the violation occurred. [See Dkt. 211 at 36, n.20.]

The FTC promulgated the TSR to implement the Telemarketing and Consumer Fraud and Abuse Prevention Act’s direction that it “prescribe rules prohibiting deceptive telemarketing acts or practices and other abusive telemarketing acts or practices.” 15 U.S.C. § 6102(a)(1). The TSR is codified in Title 16, Part 310 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Violations of the TSR constitute unfair or deceptive acts or practices in violation of section 5(a) of the FTC Act. *F.T.C. v. Pacific First Benefit, LLC*, 472 F. Supp. 2d 974, 980 (N.D. Ill. 2007) (citing 15 U.S.C. § 45(a); 15 U.S.C. § 57a(d)(3); 15 U.S.C. § 6102(c)). The TSR defines “telemarketing” to mean “a plan, program, or campaign which is conducted to *induce the purchase of goods or services* or a charitable contribution, by use of one or more telephones and which involves more than one interstate telephone call. . . .” 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(gg) (emphasis added). “Telemarketer means any person who, in connection with telemarketing, initiates or receives telephone calls to or from a customer or donor.” *Id.* § 310.2(ff). “Customer means any person who is or may be required to pay for goods or services offered through

telemarketing.” *Id.* § 310.2(n). “Seller means any person who, in connection with a telemarketing transaction, provides, offers to provide, or arranges for others to provide goods or services to the customer in exchange for consideration.” *Id.* § 310.2(dd).

Pursuant to the TSR, “[i]t is an abusive telemarketing act or practice and a violation of this Rule for a telemarketer to engage in, or for a seller to cause a telemarketer to engage in . . . (iii) *Initiating* any outbound telephone call to a person when: . . . (B) That person’s telephone number is on the ‘do-not-call’ registry, maintained by the Commission, of persons who do not wish to receive outbound telephone calls to induce the purchase of goods or services *unless* the seller or telemarketer” can demonstrate that the seller either (1) “has obtained the express agreement, in writing, of such person to place calls to that person”; or (2) “has an established business relationship with such person, and that person has not stated that he or she does not wish to receive outbound telephone calls” 16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B) (emphasis added). An “outbound telephone call” means “a telephone call initiated by a telemarketer to induce the purchase of goods or services or to solicit a charitable contribution.” 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(x).

In addition, pursuant to § 310.3(b), it is also “a violation of this Rule for a person to provide *substantial assistance or support* to any seller or telemarketer when that person knows or consciously avoids knowing that the seller or telemarketer is engaged in any act or practice that violates . . . § 310.4 of this Rule.” 16 C.F.R. § 310.3(b) (emphasis added).

B. Factual Background

The facts set forth in this opinion are drawn from the statements and exhibits that the parties filed pursuant to Local Rule 56.1. [See Dkts. 212, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 235, 236, 237, 241, 242.] These facts are undisputed except where a dispute is noted.¹ Day Pacer is a company that sold consumer leads to various educational partners. [See Dkt. 229, ¶ 17; Dkt. 227-2, ¶¶ 4-5 (Tatton affidavit).] Day Pacer previously did business under the name EduTrek, among other names. These LLC Defendants purchased data from websites where people entered their contact information, including their phone numbers. [See Dkt. 229, ¶ 15; Dkt. 236, ¶ 4; Dkt. 227-2, ¶ 5 (Tatton affidavit).] Many—but not all—of the websites collecting consumer contact information contained job postings and advertised themselves as job search sites. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 24.]

¹ Local Rule 56.1 requires a party opposing a summary judgment motion to file, in response to the movant's statement of material facts, a concise response to the movant's statement that shall contain: (A) numbered paragraphs, each corresponding to and stating a concise summary of the paragraph to which it is directed (Local Rule 56.1(e)(1)), (B) a response to each numbered paragraph in the moving party's statement (Local Rule 56.1(e)(2)), and (C) in the case of any disagreement, specific references to the affidavits, parts of the record, and other supporting materials relied upon and a concise explanation of "how the cited material controverts the asserted fact" (Local Rule 56.1(e)(3)). Defendants' Local Rule 56.1 responses include multiple numbered paragraphs that purport to dispute the FTC's facts, but do not actually dispute the contents of the paragraph, do not provide citations to the record, and/or do not "concisely explain how the cited material controverts the asserted fact." This does not comply with Local Rules 56.1(b)(2) and 56.1(e). Where Defendants dispute the FTC's facts but fail to cite the record evidence or explain how it controverts the asserted fact, the FTC's facts are deemed admitted.

After purchasing the consumer contact information from the websites, the LLC Defendants gave those phone numbers to what they refer to as “dialer companies” and paid those companies to call the numbers. [Dkt. 236, ¶¶ 20, 22.] If someone answered the call, the dialing vendor then transferred the call to Day Pacer. [*Id.*, ¶ 23.] Day Pacer operated its own 100 to 200 seat call center, which employed agents called College Search Advisers (“CSAs”). [Dkt. 229, ¶ 15.] If a consumer expressed interest in educational opportunities, Day Pacer sold that contact information to one or more educational institutions as a consumer lead. [Dkt. 236, ¶ 35; Dkt. 227-2, ¶¶ 5 & 18 (Tatton declaration).]

In addition to placing their own outbound telephone calls, Defendants also contracted with other telemarketing companies, the “IBT Partners,” to place outbound telephone calls to consumers, determine potential eligibility for enrollment in post-secondary education, and transfer the calls to the LLC Defendants for further telemarketing. [See Dkt. 229, ¶ 35 (citing model inbound transfer agreement, PX10).] Many of the IBT Partners are located outside of the United States, for instance in India and the Philippines. [*Id.*, ¶ 39.] The LLC Defendants paid the IBT Partners for the leads that they called and then transferred to the LLC Defendants. [*Id.*, ¶ 43.] In some cases, Defendants provided the IBT Partners with the telephone numbers to call. [*Id.*, ¶ 44.] And in some cases, Defendants reviewed their IBT Partners’ call scripts or provided them with scripts to use, or provided the IBT Partners with business information and guidance to increase the number of transfers they provided to the LLC Defendants. [*Id.*, ¶¶ 45, 46.]

According to the FTC, Defendants have violated the TSR by initiating millions of calls to numbers on the Do Not Call List and by assisting and facilitating the IBT partners' violations. For the most part, Defendants do not dispute that these calls occurred and that no efforts were made to comply with the TSR. Specifically, it is undisputed that between March 2014 and June 2019, the LLC Defendants made at least 3,669,914 calls to phone numbers on the Do Not Call List, including interstate calls. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 26.] Calls to numbers on the Do Not Call List accounted for approximately 25% of the outbound telephone calls initiated by the LLC Defendants. [*Id.*] Defendants did not subscribe to the Do Not Call registry and did not scrub their calling lists of DNC numbers. [*Id.*, ¶ 27.] Defendants also admit that they instructed their CSAs to overcome the "objections" of consumers who told the CSAs that they were not interested in speaking about educational opportunities or were displeased about being called. [*Id.*, ¶ 29.] In addition, the FTC has introduced transcribed calling records indicating that numerous consumers were not interested in education or in speaking with Defendants at all. [*Id.*, ¶ 32.]

It is undisputed that between March 22, 2014 and June 12, 2019, the IBT Partners transferred 498,597 calls to Defendants that were the product of outbound telephone calls to numbers on the DNC Registry (20% of the total inbound transfers received from IBT Partners during that period). [Dkt. 229, ¶ 41.] The IBT Partners made an additional approximately 39,847,000 calls to DNC numbers, which did not result in inbound transfers to Defendants. [*Id.*] Defendants operated under the assumption that the IBT Partners did not scrub numbers against the DNC Registry. [*Id.*, ¶ 48; see also Dkt. 232, ¶¶ 26, 27, 41

(Cumming’s 56.1 response disputing only that he “personally engaged” in telemarketing calls to numbers on the DNC Registry).]

The LLC Defendants received complaints from consumers, as well as from operators of the websites from which they purchased phone numbers, that they were initiating calls to phone numbers on the DNC registry. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 30; Dkt. 232, ¶ 30.] Defendants also received complaints from schools and other lead purchasers and their compliance companies that they were initiating calls to consumers without collecting proper express written authorization to be contacted. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 33; Dkt. 232, ¶ 33.] At least one major lead purchaser, EducationDynamics, refused to work with the LLC Defendants because it was concerned that their consumer data sources, such as websites, did not properly collect consumers’ consent to be contacted. [*Id.*] Defendants admit that the LLC Defendants “continued to purchase consumer data generated from websites after receiving complaints regarding those websites depending on the particular complaint.” [Dkt. 212-9 at 124 (response to request to admit no. 16).]

Defendants also received complaints and threatened lawsuits from consumers on the DNC Registry who were called by IBT Partners; Defendants acknowledge this but assert that the claims were false. [Dkt. 229, ¶¶ 49, 93; Dkt. 232, ¶¶ 49, 92; see also Dkt. 212-9 at 124 (response to request to admit no. 17).] Defendants admit that they sometimes continued to work with IBT Partners even after receiving complaints that they were calling DNC Numbers without consent. [See Dkt. 229, ¶ 42; Dkt. 212-9 at 124

(PX521, response to request to admit no. 15).] In one example, Defendants continued working with IBT Partner Bluewater despite repeated complaints and compliance notices. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 42; Dkt. 232, ¶ 42.] The FTC has also introduced call records showing that numerous consumers called by the IBT Partners were not interested in education or in speaking with the LLC Defendants at all. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 50; Dkt. 232, ¶ 50.]

Nonetheless, Defendants maintain that they did not violate the TSR, for three primary reasons: 1) the TSR is unconstitutional or otherwise invalid; 2) Defendants did not offer to sell the called parties anything and therefore are not subject to the TSR; and 3) the called parties all consented to have their data sent to educational institutions. Defendants argue further that even if their conduct did violate the TSR, they did not have the requisite level of knowledge to be held liable for civil penalties.

The FTC issued a Civil Investigative Demand to EduTrek in 2016. At that time, Cumming told the FTC that EduTrek was dissolved, but did not mention that Day Pacer was operating the same business out of the same location with most of the same employees. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 60; Dkt. 232, ¶ 60.] The FTC filed the present lawsuit in 2019. Raymond and Day Pacer employees subsequently created two new companies, Allied Contract Management LLC and Entropy Leads LLC, to conduct telemarketing operating using Day Pacer employees. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 103.]

II. Motion to Substitute

Following David Cumming's death, the FTC timely moved to substitute as defendant his daughter, Margaret Cumming, in her capacity as the personal representative of David's Estate. Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 25

governs the substitution of a party who has died. See *Russell v. City of Milwaukee*, 338 F.3d 662, 663 (7th Cir. 2003). Under Rule 25(a), “if the claim on which the suit is based survives the death (some claims, such as claims of defamation, die with the claimant), the court may order the substitution of the proper party, ordinarily the personal representative of the party who has died.” *Atkins v. City of Chicago*, 547 F.3d 869, 870-71 (7th Cir. 2008).

Rule 25(a) is written in permissive terms (“the court may”), but the parties nonetheless debate how much discretion the Court has to deny a timely motion for substitution following the death of a party. [See Dkt. 267 at 2 (FTC citing *Saylor v. Bastedo*, 623 F.2d 230, 237 (2d Cir. 1980), for the proposition that “it is difficult to imagine a case where discretion might properly be exercised to deny a motion to substitute for a deceased plaintiff made within the rule’s time limits”); Dkt. 263 at 2-3 (the Estate citing *In re Baycol Prod. Litig.*, 616 F.3d 778, 783 (8th Cir. 2010), and *Beaudry v. TeleCheck Services, Inc.*, 2016 WL 11398115, at *11 (M.D. Tenn. Sept. 29, 2016), to show that the Court has discretion to deny a Rule 25(a) motion)]. The Court’s own limited research indicates that it may be a proper exercise of discretion to deny a Rule 25(a) motion to substitute “where ‘circumstances have arisen rendering it unfair to allow substitution.’” *Symons Int’l Group, Inc. v. Continental Cas. Co.*, 2015 WL 1279839, at *9 (S.D. Ind. Mar. 20, 2015) (quoting *S & W X-Ray, Inc. v. Film Recovery Sys., Inc.*, No. 84 C 10479, 1987 WL 6626, at *3 (N.D. Ill. Feb. 9, 1987)); see also Fed. R. Civ. P. 25, advisory committee note to 1963 amendment. Regardless of the exact standard that applies, the Estate has not shown that it would be unfair to allow substitution.

The parties in this case agree that Margaret Cumming would be the proper party for substitution if the FTC's claims survived David's death. But the Estate opposes substitution on the basis that the FTC's claims are penal in nature and, therefore, did not survive David's death. As noted above, the FTC brought this suit to enforce Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a), and the TSR promulgated under the Telemarketing Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 6101-6108. Neither of these statutes specifies whether a claim brought to enforce it survives the death of the defendant. Therefore, resolution of the survival issue is governed by federal common law. See *Smith v. No. 2 Galesburg Crown Fin. Corp.*, 615 F.2d 407, 413 (7th Cir. 1980), *overruled on other grounds by* *Pridegon v. Gates Credit Union*, 683 F.2d 182 (7th Cir. 1982); see also *Hoffman v. Sumner*, 478 F. Supp. 2d 1024, 1030 (N.D. Ill. 2007); *McKinney v. Panico*, 2022 WL 2356476, at *2 (N.D. Ill. June 30, 2022). Under federal common law, remedial claims survive the defendant's death, *Smith*, 615 F.2d at 415; actions for penalties do not, *Schreiber v. Sharpless*, 110 U.S. 76 (1884). But it is not always easy to tell if a statutory claim is remedial or penal.

The FTC Act has long been characterized as a remedial statute. *Sears, Roebuck & Co. v. F.T.C.*, 258 F. 307, 311 (7th Cir. 1919); see also *F.T.C. v. AT&T Mobility*, 883 F.3d 848, 854 (9th Cir. 2018) ("Because the FTC Act is a remedial statute, we are 'guided by the familiar canon of statutory construction that remedial legislation should be construed broadly to effectuate its purposes.'" (quoting *Tcherepnin v. Knight*, 389 U.S. 332, 336 (1967))). But it also creates a cause of action for what the statute labels as "a civil penalty." 15 U.S.C. § 45(m)(1)(A). Under this provision, "[t]he Commission may commence a civil action to

recover a civil penalty . . . against any person, partnership, or corporation which violates any rule under this subchapter respecting unfair or deceptive acts or practices . . . with actual knowledge or knowledge fairly implied on the basis of objective circumstances that such act is unfair or deceptive and is prohibited by such rule.” *Id.* The FTC Act “requires that ‘[i]n determining the amount of such a civil penalty, the court shall take into account the degree of culpability, any history of prior such conduct, ability to pay, effect on ability to continue to do business, and such other matters as justice may require.’” *United States v. Dish Network L.L.C.*, 954 F.3d 970, 980 (7th Cir. 2020) (quoting 15 U.S.C. § 45(m)(1)(C)).

Although the FTC Act labels an action under § 45(m)(1)(C) as one for “penalties,” this does not necessarily mean that such an action is penal. The designations “penal” and “penalty” often appear in civil actions where the remedy is not in fact strictly penal. See *Huntington v. Attrill*, 146 U.S. 657, 667 (1892). The Seventh Circuit has not addressed whether an action for civil penalties under the FTC Act should be considered penal or remedial for purposes of allowing substitution of a defendant under Rule 25(a). Since the term penal “is used in different contexts to mean different things,” the Seventh Circuit has identified three factors that should be considered in determining whether a statutory action is penal for survival purposes: “(1) whether the purpose of the action is to redress individual wrongs or wrongs to the public; (2) whether recovery runs to the individual or to the public; [and] (3) whether the authorized recovery is wholly disproportionate to the harm suffered.” *Smith*, 615 F.2d at 414 (citing *Murphy v. Household Finance Corp.*, 560 F.2d 206, 209 (6th Cir. 1977)). The FTC and the Estate agree

that this is the proper framework for assessing survivability. [See Dkt. 247 at 3; Dkt. 263 at 3.]

The FTC argues that the first factor weighs in favor of substitution because the purpose of the TSR is to protect individual consumers from specific telemarketing behavior identified as abusive and coercive. The Estate responds that the civil penalties in this case are intended as a deterrent, so therefore the remedy is meant to address wrongs to the public, not individuals. *Smith* is instructive on how the Court should treat a statute that arguably addresses both general harm to the public and harm to specific consumers. The question in *Smith* was whether a claim for violation of the Truth In Lending Act (“TILA”) survived the death of one of the defendants. On the first factor, the Seventh Circuit determined that the purpose of a TILA action is “to remedy abuses resulting from consumer ignorance of the nature of credit arrangements by requiring disclosures in the hope of enable consumers to shop for credit by comparing uniform terms.” *Smith*, 615 F.2d at 414. The court acknowledge that “[w]ithout doubt, the statutory scheme ha[d] the effect of redressing a perceived social ill.” *Id.* However, “the entire focus of the legislation [w]as on the options open to the individual consumer”: it did not mandate terms and conditions of credit but rather “madate[d] only disclosure, leaving the consumer to choose among the available terms and conditions.” *Id.*; see also *James v. Home Const. Co. of Mobile, Inc.*, 621 F.2d 727, 729-30 (5th Cir. 1980) (agreeing with *Smith* that a TILA action under 15 U.S.C. § 1635 survives the death of the plaintiff). The statutes at issue here also focus on the individual consumer, even though they also have “the effect of redressing a perceived social ill.” *Id.*

The Congressional findings of the Telemarketing Act recognize that “[c]onsumers and others are estimated to lose \$40 billion a year in telemarketing fraud,” that “[c]onsumers are victimized by other forms of telemarketing deception and abuse,” and that, “[c]onsequently, Congress should enact legislation that will offer consumers necessary protection from telemarketing deception and abuse.” 15 U.S.C. § 6101. The TSR leaves it to consumers to choose if they want telemarketing calls.

The Court is also guided by the Sixth Circuit’s decision in *Parchman v. SLM Corp.*, 896 F.3d 728 (6th Cir. 2018), which involved whether a plaintiff’s claims for violation of the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (“TCPA”) survived the plaintiff’s death. The TCPA prohibits much of the same conduct as the TSR, including calling numbers on the DNC List. *Compare* 16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B) (TSR DNC Registry provision), *with* 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200(c)(2) (TCPA rule DNC Registry provision); *compare* 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(ff)-(gg) (TSR definitions of “telemarketer” and “telemarketing”) *with* 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200(f)(15) (TCPA rule definition of “telephone solicitation”); see also 15 U.S.C. § 6153 (directing FCC to “consult and coordinate” with the FTC “to maximize consistency with” rules promulgated by the FTC). The Sixth Circuit found that the claim survived and that the first factor weighed in favor of the plaintiff because “[t]he primary purpose of the TCPA was to protect individuals from the harassment, invasion of privacy, inconvenience, nuisance, and other harms associated with unsolicited, automated calls.” *Parchman*, 896 F.3d at 738. The court rejected the notion that because “[t]he harm is widely shared does not mean it is a general public wrong,” reasoning that “[t]hese

are harms felt by identifiable individuals, as individuals.”
Id. at 739.

Likewise, when a consumer receives a telemarketing call after placing her name on the DNC List, but a telemarketer calls her anyway, the harm is felt by the individual consumer, not the public generally. If consumers do not mind receiving such calls, and do not place their names on the DNC List, then the FTC will not sue to vindicate their interests. The first *Smith* factor therefore weighs in favor of substitutability. See also *F.T.C. v. Capital City Mortgage Corp.*, 321 F. Supp. 2d 16, 22-23 (D.D.C. 2004) (“While other courts have also acknowledged the dual remedial and penal nature of penalties assessed under consumer protection statutes, those courts have often found those penalties to be remedial, not penal, in nature.” (citing *Mourning v. Family Publications Service, Inc.*, 411 U.S. 356, 376 (1973)); see also *Citronelle-Mobile Gathering, Inc. v. O’Leary*, 499 F. Supp. 871, 887 (S.D. Ala. 1980) (explaining that “most modern consumer remedies . . . [have] a dual purpose” that includes “remedying harm to the individual who could not practically protect himself from violations by allowing the government to enforce the law for the individual’s benefit” and “deter[ring] prohibited business practices for the good of the general public,” and that such a dual purpose does not vitiate the overall remedial nature of the claim); cf. *McKinney v. Panico*, 2022 WL 2356476, at *3 (N.D. Ill. June 30, 2022) (following “[m]ore recent decisions from courts in this District” that have found RICO claims to be remedial; while RICO had “both remedial and punitive aspects,” “overall, the statute served to address individual wrongs”).

Next, the Court considers *Smith*'s second factor: whether the recovery sought runs to the individual or to the public. The FTC concedes that the recovery it seeks would be paid to the U.S. Treasury, not the allegedly harmed consumers. According to the Estate, this factor is "critical" and requires the Court to deny substitution. [Dkt. 263 at 6.] But according to the FTC, the payment mechanism to the U.S. Treasury does not by itself transform an otherwise remedial statutory scheme into one that is penal.

Cumming cites *United States v. Edwards*, 667 F. Supp. 1204 (W.D. Tenn. 1987), for the proposition that the second factor is "critical." That case involved the survivability of claims brought to enforce the civil penalty provision of the Clean Water Act. The first factor weighed against survivability because the complaint and "most of the testimony concerning harm dealt with harm to the general public from the destruction of habitats for the wetlands animal and plant life." 667 F. Supp. at 1213. The third factor—whether the civil penalty is disproportionate to the harm suffered—was "not . . . critical" because it depended on the "value of a fish, a tree, or an active beaver colony," which was subjective. See *id.* at 1213-14. On the second factor, the court contrasted the Clean Water Act with "antitrust, patent/copyright infringement, securities fraud, and truth in lending actions, where the penalty survives the wrongdoer's death" and "any recovery of the so called 'penal' damages is paid to the injured party and not the government." *Id.* at 1213.

The FTC relies instead on *F.T.C. v. Capital City Mortgage Corp.*, 321 F. Supp. 2d 16 (D.D.C. 2004), which involved claims that City Mortgage Corporation violated

the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 1691-1691(f), and the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 41-48. The ECOA authorizes the FTC to use its enforcement powers to implement the ECOA. See *Capital City*, 321 F. Supp. 2d at 20-21; 15 U.S.C. § 1691c(c). The court in *Capital City Mortgage* concluded that under factor two, the penalties sought by the FTC were not penal because the FTC's collection mechanism (to the public at large rather than individuals) itself came from the FTC Act, a "remedial, consumer protection statute." 321 F. Supp. 2d at 22.

The Court finds *Capital City Mortgage* more relevant and helpful than *Edwards* because it analyzed the FTC Act and consumer protection statutes. See also *F.T.C. v. AMG Services, Inc.*, 2014 WL 2742872, at *2 (D. Nev. June 17, 2014) (granting unopposed motion to substitute trustee for deceased individual defendant in FTC action and noting that "[n]umerous courts have determined that consumer protection statutes, like TILA and the FTC Act, are remedial in nature"). Therefore, the fact that payments go to the public is not determinative of whether the relief is penal or remedial. See *Jim 72 Properties, LLC v. Montgomery Cleaners*, 151 F. Supp. 3d 1092, 1099 (C.D. Cal. 2015) (private right of action provided for under Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, which authorized citizen suit against a polluter, was primarily "remedial" in nature and therefore survivable; the Act was meant to address individual harms, since its focus was not just environmental waste clean-up, but also the health of those who had been harmed by toxic waste, and monetary penalties in the statute were intended to reimburse government for the actual costs of rectifying environmental degradation, not to punish polluter).

Finally, the Court examines whether the authorized recovery is wholly disproportionate to the harm suffered. In its summary judgment papers, the FTC maintains that Defendants are responsible for at least 4,168,511 violations of the TSR. [See Dkt. 211 at 36 & n.20.] If the FTC sought the maximum statutory recovery for each violation (between \$16,000 and \$42,530, depending on exactly when the violation occurred), the total maximum allowable civil penalty would be in excess of \$100 billion. *Id.* Its motion for summary judgment, the FTC proposes a civil penalty of \$28,681,863.88—or about \$6.88 per call.² The Estate argues that, in assessing proportionality, the Court should focus on the maximum recovery authorized by the statute, rather than the amount sought by the FTC. The Estate urges the Court to focus on “the sheer magnitude of the civil penalties [the FTC] has reserved the right to seek,” which could reach into the billions of dollars. [Dkt. 263 at 7.]

The Court finds *Parchman* instructive on the third factor, too. The TSR and FTC Act, like the TCPA, allow “the court discretion to decide in each case whether and how much to increase damages, unlike the provisions in the other statutes which automatically provide multiple recovery.” *Parchman*, 896 F.3d at 740.³ Indeed, in *Dish*

² The FTC also calculates the per-call penalty using an additional 39,847,000 calls allegedly made “by Defendants’ IBT partners,” which “works out to approximately \$0.65 per call.” [Dkt. 247, at 5-6 & n.4.] However, the Court finds it inappropriate to use the larger number of allegedly illegal calls in assessing proportionality because the FTC represents in its summary judgment motion that it is not seeking civil penalties for the additional 39,847,000 calls. [Dkt. 211 at 17, n.6.]

³ And even statutes that automatically provide multiple recovery, like RICO, have been found to be remedial. See *Shearson/American*

Network, the Seventh Circuit indicated that the Court should consider the “harm” caused by Defendants as the starting point for determining appropriate penalties, rather than the “wealth” of Defendants. 954 F.3d at 980. Since the statutory framework allows the Court “to evaluate the facts of a particular case and, perhaps, the harm caused to the plaintiff by the defendant’s violations in determining the appropriate level of damages,” this suggests that the TSR is remedial. *Parchman*, 896 F.3d at 740. Therefore, the Court finds it appropriate to focus on the amount actually sought by the FTC, rather than maximum statutory penalty in the billions.

The Estate further argues that even if the third factor is evaluated using the lower amount of \$28.7 million, this is “wholly disproportionate” to the “intangible harm of allegedly unwanted phone calls.” [Dkt. 263 at 7.] Plaintiff cites *Hannabury v. Hilton Grand Vacations Company, LLC*, 174 F. Supp. 3d 768 (W.D.N.Y. 2016), in support. In that case, the Western District of New York concluded in a TCPA case that “a \$500 award for a phone call, which could be trebled up to \$1,500, is wholly disproportionate to the harm suffered” by a plaintiff who received two phone calls from the defendant even though the plaintiff’s phone number was on the DNC registry. *Id.* at 776. *Hannabury*, however, appears to be an outlier. The next court in the Western District of New York to consider the same

Express v. McMahon, 482 U.S. 220, 240-241 (1987) (the policing or penal function of RICO’s treble damages provision is a “secondary concern” to its remedial one); *PacifiCare Health Sys., Inc. v. Book*, 538 U.S. 401, 406 (2003); *Saleh v. Merchant*, 2017 WL 1478000, at *6 (N.D. Ill. Apr. 25, 2017) (concluding that RICO treble damages are not “wholly disproportionate” and that a RICO claim survives a plaintiff’s death).

issue declined to follow it, see *Sharp v. Ally Financial, Inc.*, 328 F. Supp. 3d 81, 97 (W.D.N.Y. 2018), and the Sixth Circuit in *Parchman* criticized it. See 896 F.3d at 738; see also *Precise v. Credit One Bank, N.A.*, 2018 WL 11491440, at *2 (N.D. Fla. July 26, 2018) (the TCPA’s available remedies are not wholly disproportionate to the contemplated harms, even if they are non-monetary). Moreover, to the extent that *Hannabury* is instructive, it involved a per-call penalty—\$500, or \$1,500 when trebled—that was many times higher than the \$6.88 per call that the FTC seeks here. For this reason, it provides weak support for the Estate’s claim that \$6.88 per call is wholly disproportionate.

The Estate emphasizes the sheer size of the award sought by the FTC, but that amount is large in great part because Defendants were responsible for placing millions of calls to consumers whose numbers are on the Do Not Call List. As the Seventh Circuit has recognized in the context of TSR violations, “[s]omeone whose maximum penalty reaches the mesosphere only because the number of violations can’t complain about the consequences of its own extensive misconduct.” *Dish Network L.L.C.*, 954 F.3d at 980. The high volume of allegedly violative calls—which represent individual consumer injuries—translates to a large dollar amount in civil penalties. But it does not follow that the magnitude of the alleged misconduct in this case—which results in the pursuit of high penalties—makes the statutory scheme penal rather than remedial. In light of how many consumers were allegedly harmed, the Court is not convinced that the amount sought by the FTC is grossly disproportionate to the harm caused by Defendants’ telemarketing in violation of the TSR. To the extent that the Court has reservations about the size of

the penalty sought by the FTC, the Court will explore them with the parties before ordering Defendants—and particularly the Estate—to pay civil penalties.

Outside of the *Smith* factors, the Estate argues that the Court should deny the motion for substitution based on the equities. [Dkt. 263 at 10.] From the Estate’s perspective, substituting Margaret Cumming would be unfair because Day Pacer was “not a profitable business” and, as a partial owner, David Cumming invested more than he earned, so the money in the Estate was not the result of ill-gotten gains. [*Id.*] Further, the Estate points to the fact that David Cumming’s heirs would be the individuals to bear the financial impact of substitution, despite being unfamiliar with the underlying allegedly violative conduct. *Id.* By the same token, however, it would be inequitable to allow the Estate to avoid any liability while leaving Ian and Raymond responsible for the full penalty amount. The motion for substitution is granted.

III. Motions for Summary Judgment

A. Legal Standard

Summary judgment is proper where “the movant shows that there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 56(a); see *Celotex Corp. v. Catrett*, 477 U.S. 317, 323 (1986). A genuine issue of material fact exists if “the evidence is such that a reasonable jury could return a verdict for the nonmoving party.” *Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc.*, 477 U.S. 242, 248 (1986); see also *Birch|Rea Partners, Inc. v. Regent Bank*, 27 F.4th 1245, 1249 (7th Cir. 2022). The Court “must construe all facts and draw all reasonable inferences in the light most favorable to the nonmoving party.” *Majors v. Gen. Elec. Co.*,

714 F.3d 527, 532 (7th Cir. 2013) (citation omitted). Where, as here, the parties have cross-moved for summary judgment, the Court is required to “construe all inferences in favor of the party against whom the motion under consideration [was] made.” *Ten Pas v. Lincoln Nat’l Life Ins. Co.*, 31 F.4th 541, 545 (7th Cir. 2022) (quoting *Hess v. Reg-Allen Mach. Tool Corp.*, 423 F.3d 653, 658 (7th Cir. 2005)). The Court “may not make credibility determinations, weigh the evidence, or decide which inferences to draw from the facts; these are jobs for a factfinder.” *Johnson v. Rimmer*, 936 F.3d 695, 705 (7th Cir. 2019) (quoting *Payne v. Pauley*, 337 F.3d 767, 770 (7th Cir. 2003)).

Summary judgment “is the ‘put up or shut up’ moment in a lawsuit, when a party must show what evidence it has that would convince a trier of fact to accept its version of events.” *Wade v. Ramos*, 26 F.4th 440, 446 (7th Cir. 2022) (quoting *Schacht v. Wis. Dept’ of Corr.*, 175 F.3d 497, 504 (7th Cir. 1999)). A party opposing summary judgment must go beyond the pleadings and “set forth specific facts showing that there is a genuine issue for trial.” *Liberty Lobby*, 477 U.S. at 250. Summary judgment is proper if the nonmoving party “fails to make a showing sufficient to establish the existence of an element essential to that party’s case, and on which that party will bear the burden of proof at trial.” *Ellis v. CCA of Tennessee LLC*, 650 F.3d 640, 646 (7th Cir. 2011) (quoting *Celotex*, 477 U.S. at 322). The non-moving party “must do more than simply show that there is some metaphysical doubt as to the material facts.” *Matsushita Elec. Indus. Co., Ltd. v. Zenith Radio Corp.*, 475 U.S. 574, 586 (1986). The “mere existence of a scintilla of evidence in support of the [non-movant’s] position will be insufficient; there must be evidence on which

the jury could reasonably find for the [non-movant].” *Liberty Lobby*, 477 U.S. at 252.

B. Analysis

1. Challenges to the TSR

Defendants raise a number of legal challenges to the TSR itself, which the Court will address before turning to the substance of the FTC’s claims.

First, Defendants challenge the FTC’s authority to bring an action to enforce the TSR on the basis that the FTC does “not maintain the requisite person specific registry” required by § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B). [Dkt. 219 at 32.] Instead, the FTC only “maintains a list of telephone numbers that are not identified by, or correlated to, the names of any person” and thus the “Registry does not show, and the FTC does not know, whether the account holder for the telephone number placed the telephone number on the Registry.” [*Id.* at 33.] The Court is not convinced that the FTC lacks enforcement authority due to a purported failure to maintain a sufficiently detailed registry. Section 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B) “does not say the call must be initiated to the person who registered the number on the Registry” in order to violate the TSR. *U.S. v. Dish Network*, 75 F. Supp. 3d 942, 1007 (C.D. Ill. 2014), *vacated in part on reconsideration*, 80 F. Supp. 3d 917 (C.D. Ill. 2015). Rather, “[i]t is an abusive telemarketing act or practice and a violation of [the TSR] for a telemarketer to engage in, or for a seller to cause a telemarketer to engage in . . . initiating any outbound telephone call to a person when . . . [t]hat person’s telephone number is on the ‘do-no-call’ registry[.]” 16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B). A defendant violates the TSR by dialing a person whose number is on the registry, regardless of whether that person is the one

who originally registered the number. The only relevant precedent cited by either side is *Dish Network*, with which this Court agrees. See 75 F. Supp. 3d at 1007 (“The TSR states that a violation occurs if the telemarketing call is initiated to a person when the person’s telephone number is on the Registry.”).

Second, Defendants raise a related First Amendment “overbreadth” challenge, arguing that enforcement of the TSR is unconstitutional because the registry applies to all calls to a telephone number and is not limited to calls by the person who initially placed the number on the registry. [See Dkt. 230 at 7.] Defendants suggest that the TSR was required to be narrowly tailored, citing *Reed v. Town of Gilbert, Ariz.*, 576 U.S. 155 (2015). But they do not explain the relevance of *Reed*, which involved a town sign code that subjected ideological, political, and temporary event signs to different restrictions. “Perfunctory and undeveloped arguments, as well as arguments that are unsupported by pertinent authority, are waived.” *White v. United States*, 8 F.4th 547, 552 (7th Cir. 2021).

In any event, telemarketing calls that interrupt a registrant’s privacy at home are not somehow less of an invasion if the registrant’s family member picks up the call than if the registrant does so. Indeed, the FTC explicitly considered the issue of households with multiple phone users and determined registering phone numbers is necessary to “accomplish its privacy protection objectives,” noting that members of one household with differing interests in receiving calls could obtain more than one phone line or provide express authorization to specific telemarketers. 68 Fed. Reg. 4580, 4639 n.708; see also *id.* at

4640 & n.710 (explaining that collecting consumer telephone numbers rather than names was all that was needed to protect privacy, ensure accuracy of the Registry, and efficiently operate the Registry); 15 U.S.C. § 6155(a), (b) (numbers remain indefinitely on the Registry absent the individual to whom the number is assigned requesting removal or the number being disconnected and reassigned). Congress expressly agreed with this approach in ratifying the Registry. 15 U.S.C. § 6151.

Third, Defendants also make a First Amendment “underinclusiveness” argument, which is slightly better developed but not supported by the cases on which Defendants rely. [See Dkt. 230 at 8-9.] According to Defendants, the TSR is content-based and therefore subject to strict scrutiny. Defendants cite the Tenth Circuit’s decision in *Mainstream Marketing Services, Inc. v. F.T.C.*, 358 F.3d 1228 (10th Cir. 2004). [See Dkt. 230 at 8.] But that case does not support their argument. In *Mainstream Media*, the Tenth Circuit rejected telemarketers’ First Amendment challenge to the FTC’s and the FCC’s do-not-call regulations, which exempted charitable and political callers. The Tenth Circuit applied intermediate scrutiny using *Central Hudson*’s “three-part test governing First Amendment challenges to regulations restricting non-misleading commercial speech that relates to lawful activity”: “First, the government must assert a substantial interest to be achieved by the regulation. Second, the regulation must directly advance that governmental interest, meaning that it must do more than provide ‘only ineffective or remote support for the government’s purpose.’ Third, although the regulation need not be the least restrictive measure available, it must be narrowly tailored not to restrict more speech than necessary.” *Mainstream*

Marketing, 358 F.3d at 1237 (citing *Central Hudson Gas & Elec. Corp. v. Pub. Serv. Comm’n of N.Y.*, 447 U.S. 557, 564 (1980)). “Together, these final two factors require that there be a reasonable fit between the government’s objectives and the means it chooses to accomplish those ends.” *Id.* The Tenth Circuit concluded that the DNC regulations satisfied this test because they were enacted to protect the privacy of individuals in their homes and to protect consumers against risk of fraudulent and abusive solicitation; the registry’s opt-in character ensured that it did not inhibit any speech directed at the home of a willing listener; the registry blocked a substantial number and significant percentage of unwanted telemarketing calls; and Congress, the FTC and the FCC all determined that commercial calls affected by the registry were most to blame for problems that the regulations sought to redress. *Id.*

To the extent that Defendants urge the Court to apply *Mainstream Marketing Services*, it supports the FTC’s position, not Defendants’. The TSR is intended to protect the privacy of individuals in their homes; its opt-in character ensures that it does not inhibit speech directed at willing listeners; and it is aimed at the same type of commercial speech examined by the Tenth Circuit. Although the Seventh Circuit has not expressly adopted this approach, it has cited it approvingly in at least one case. See *Patriotic Veterans, Inc. v. Zoeller*, 845 F.3d 303, 305-06 (7th Cir. 2017) (“No one can deny the legitimacy of the state’s goal: Preventing the phone (at home or in one’s pocket) from frequently ringing with unwanted calls. . . . Federal law severely limits unsolicited calls to cell phones, and the FTC maintains a do-not-call registry for landline phones, just as the Postal Service maintains a no-junk-

mail list. These devices have been sustained against constitutional challenge.” (citing *Rowan v. Post Office*, 397 U.S. 728 (1970); *Mainstream Marketing Services*, 358 F.3d 1228)).

Defendants also rely [Dkt. 230 at 9] on the Supreme Court’s decision in *Barr v. American Association of Political Consultants, Inc.*, 140 S. Ct. 2335, -- U.S. -- (2020). In that case, the Supreme Court considered a First Amendment challenge to an exception to the TCPA’s restriction on automated calls or “robocalls” to cell phones, for the collection of debts owed to or guaranteed by the federal government. The Court treated the statute as a content-based law, applied strict scrutiny, and concluded that the statute impermissibly favored debt-collection speech over political and other speech, in violation of the First Amendment. See *id.* at 2346-47. The dissent criticized the majority for applying strict scrutiny and called for the application of intermediate scrutiny evaluating the “restriction’s speech-related harms in light of its justifications.” *Id.* at 2362 (Breyer, J., dissenting in part). But the majority explained that its holding was limited: “The issue before us concerns only robocalls to cell phones . . . [and] [o]ur decision is not intended to expand existing First Amendment doctrine or to otherwise affect traditional or ordinary economic regulation of commercial activity.” *Id.* at 2347 (majority opinion). Given *American Association of Political Consultants*’ limited holding, the Court finds it inappropriate to apply strict scrutiny to the TSR. And whether the Court applies intermediate scrutiny as in *Mainstream Marketing Services* (as Cumming urges) or the balancing approach used by the Seventh Circuit in *National Coalition of Prayer, Inc. v. Carter*, 455 F.3d 783,

787 (7th Cir. 2006) (as advanced by the FTC), Cumming cannot establish a First Amendment violation.

In *National Coalition of Prayer*, the Seventh Circuit considered a challenge to a provision of Indiana’s Telephone Privacy Act, which precluded tax-exempt charities from using professional telemarketers to place fundraising calls to state residents who placed their names on the state’s do-not-call list. *Id.* at 784. The Court found that the law was not content-based, and thus, the plaintiff charities’ free speech challenge to the provision would be analyzed under the legitimate interest test, rather than the strict scrutiny standard. *Id.* at 789. The court reasoned that since the Do Not Call List allowed residents to opt-in to the Act, the provision did not have to be narrowly tailored to protect residential privacy. *Id.* at 791-92. In addition, the court found that the Act was not underbroad even though it exempted political and charitable speech. The court reasoned that “[b]ecause the Act sharply curtails telemarketing—the speech that was most injurious to residential privacy—while excluding speech that historically enjoys greater First Amendment protection, we are satisfied that the Act is not underbroad.” *Id.* at 792.

The TSR’s Registry provisions are analogous to the Indiana do-not-call registry in *National Coalition*, involving an “opt-in” registry of consumer phone numbers. Its exemptions for political and charitable speech reflect the historically greater protection that such speech has enjoyed. And its other exemptions simply reflect that certain industries are not regulated by the FTC, such as banks, securities, insurance companies, and common carriers. Whether the TSR is analyzed using *National Coalition of Prayer*’s balancing approach or intermediate

scrutiny as in *Mainstream Marketing*, Cumming is unable to establish a First Amendment violation.

Fourth, Defendants argue that consumers have a First Amendment right to solicit speech from them. [Dkt. 230 at 6-7 (citing *Kleindienst v. Mandel*, 408 U.S. 753, 762 (1972) (acknowledging a First Amendment right to “receive information and ideas” but upholding Attorney General’s decision to deny visa to Belgium journalist whom American plaintiffs had invited to participate in academic conferences in the U.S.); *Procunier v. Martinez*, 416 U.S. 396, 419 (1974) (due process right of inmates to seek and receive assistance of attorneys to challenge unlawful convictions and seek redress for violations of constitutional rights).] The Court does not find this argument compelling because the TSR does not prevent individuals who want to receive information from doing so. Consumers register their telephone numbers on the Registry precisely because they *do not* wish to receive telemarketing calls, and the Telemarketing Act and TSR set forth the compelling governmental purpose of protecting consumers’ privacy. If Defendants could establish that the dialed parties did, in fact, provide express prior written consent that complies with the rule, then Defendants would not be liable under the TSR. But, as explained below, Defendants have failed to develop a factual record supporting their theory that they obtained consent from consumers to contact them about educational opportunities.

Fifth, Defendants argue that their commercial speech cannot be curtailed without violating the First Amendment because consumers could avoid the objectionable speech—the LLC Defendants’ calls—by “not provid[ing] a name and phone number on a website.” [Dkt. 230 at 18.]

This argument also fails due to Defendants' inability to demonstrate that all customers did, in fact, provide valid consent to be called about educational services that Defendants marketed.⁴

2. Statute of Limitations

Defendants argue that the FTC's claims are subject to the three-year statute of limitations set out in 15 U.S.C. § 57b(d) and that, as a result, the FTC is barred from bringing suit based on any act or practice occurring prior to March 22, 2016. According to Defendants, this means that judgment should be entered in favor of EduTrek on all claims against it because EduTrek ceased doing business on October 31, 2015. [Dkt. 219 at 36.]

Defendants are not entitled to summary judgment based on the statute of limitations. Section 57b authorizes the FTC to seek compensatory remedies to redress injuries to consumers and others caused by a violation of an FTC rule. 15 U.S.C. § 57b(b). Claims brought under this provision are subject to a three-year statute of limitations. 15 U.S.C. § 57b(d). But the remedies provided in § 57b are "in addition to, and not in lieu of, any other remedy or right of action provided by State or Federal law." *Id.* § 57b(e).

The FTC seeks civil penalties under 15 U.S.C. § 45(m) and injunctive relief under 15 U.S.C. § 53(b). These sections of the FTC Act "contain no express statutes of limitations." *Dish Network*, 75 F. Supp. 3d at 1004. The

⁴ Defendants also raise an Eighth Amendment challenge, arguing that the FTC seeks an excessive fine and the suit is therefore penal in nature. The Court will address this argument when determining the appropriate penalty.

FTC's claim for civil penalties is governed by the FTC's general five-year statute of limitations for actions for "any civil fine, penalty, or forfeiture." 28 U.S.C. § 2462; see also *Gabelli v. S.E.C.*, 568 U.S. 442, 444 (recognizing § 2462 as the general federal statute of limitations for actions for civil penalties); *United States v. Ancorp Nat'l Servs., Inc.*, 516 F.2d 198, 200 n.5 (2d Cir. 1975) (applying § 2462 to actions for civil penalties under FTC Act for violations of cease and desist order); *Dish Network*, 75 F. Supp. 3d at 1004. And the FTC's claim for equitable relief is not subject to any statute of limitations. See *id.* (citing *F.T.C. v. Inc21.com Corp.*, 745 F. Supp. 2d 975, 1012 (N.D. Cal. 2010); *F.T.C. v. Instant Response Systems, LLC*, 2014 WL 558688, at *3 (E.D.N.Y. Feb. 11, 2014); *F.T.C. v. Minute-man Press*, 53 F. Supp. 2d 248, 263 (E.D.N.Y. 1998)).

3. Liability for Calls Made by the LLC Defendants

The FTC seeks to hold Defendants responsible for calls placed by the LLC Defendants and their dialing vendors. As noted above, it is undisputed that the LLC Defendants made at least 3,669,914 calls to phone numbers on the Do Not Call List. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 26.] Defendants also do not dispute that at least some of those calls were interstate phone calls. [*Id.*, ¶ 40.]⁵

Instead, Defendants take the position that their business is not subject to the TSR because: 1) the TSR does

⁵ In its opening brief, the FTC establishes that Day Payer and EduTrek were operated as a common enterprise such that their liability should be joint and several. [See Dkt. 211 at 24-25.] The FTC also establishes that Day Pacer is liable for EduTrek's TSR violations as a successor to EduTrek. [See *id.* at 25-26.] Defendants do not dispute either point.

not apply to their calls, which did include sales pitches and were purely informational; and 2) the LLC Defendants only called consumers who solicited and consented to receiving their calls. Further, Defendants contend that even if their understanding of the TSR was wrong, the FTC cannot establish that Defendants had actual knowledge or knowledge fairly implied on the basis of objective circumstances that they were violating the TSR.

a. Are the LLC Defendants' Activities Subject to the TSR?

Defendants argue that they are entitled to summary judgment because the LLC Defendants are not “telemarketers” and have not engaged in “telemarketing” as those terms are defined in the TSR. In support of this argument, Defendants *do not* rely on the TSR’s definition of “telemarketer,” which includes “any person who, in connection with telemarketing, initiates or receives telephone calls to or from a customer or donor,” 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(ff), or “telemarketing,” which means “a plan, program, or campaign which is conducted to induce the purchase of goods or services. . . .” 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(gg). Instead, Defendants rely on a Revised Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and a Statement of Basis and Purpose of the Final Rule, which the FTC issued while promulgating the TSR. [See Dkt.219 at 26-27.] Both of these sources explain: “The Commission intended that the definition of the term ‘telemarketer’ apply to persons making a telephone call to, or receiving a telephone call from, a customer in connection with or about the purchase of goods or services. It does not include persons making or receiving customer service calls or similar tangential telephone contacts *unless a sales offer is made and accepted during*

such calls.” [*Id.* at 26 (quoting 60 Fed. Reg. 30,406, at 30,411 (June 8, 1995), and 60 Fed. Reg. 43,842, at 43,844 (Aug. 23, 1995); emphases by Defendants).] Based on this guidance, Defendants argue that they are not subject to the TSR because they “never engaged in a conversation in which a sales pitch or sales offer was made or accepted during the conversation, or any sales call of any kind.” [*Id.* at 27.] Rather, their conversations were “purely informational.” [*Id.*]

Defendants are misreading the FTC’s guidance. The language they emphasize—“unless a sales offer is made and accepted during such calls”—is modifying the sentence concerning “customer service calls”; such calls are not considered telemarketing “unless a sales offer is made and accepted during such calls.” The FTC has advised in its “FAQs” that “purely informational calls” are limited to incidental contacts “like your cable company confirming a service appointment.” [Dkt. 227-7 at 3-4.] Its guidance has no application here, because none of the challenged calls were to existing customers or concerned customer service issues. The FTC’s guidance does not modify the plain language of the TSR, which defines “telemarketing” broadly to including any “plan, program, or campaign which is conducted to induce the purchase of goods or services or a charitable contribution” 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(gg). Neither the definition of telemarketer nor telemarketing requires a direct sale or sales offer between the person placing the call and the consumer.

Moreover, Defendants do not dispute that the LLC Defendants’ business model was designed to generate consumer leads in order to sell them to educational pro-

grams. [See Dkt. 219-2, ¶¶ 4-5 (Tatton affidavit).] For instance, Cumming acknowledges that “[t]he goal of the two call center companies was to sell leads.” [Dkt. 230-1, ¶ 10(h).] For-profit educational programs then used those leads in an effort to enroll people in their programs. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 17; Dkt. 212-7 at 33 (deposition transcript of Brett Larson, who worked for EduTrek and Day Pacer).] Defendants referred to this sales goal as “conversion.” [Dkt. 229, ¶ 18; Dkt. 212-3 at 166 *et seq.* (PX64, Day Pacer email concerning conversion).] The FTC has also presented multiple pieces of evidence that Day Pacer self-identified as being part of educational marketing services. [Dkt. 229, ¶¶ 16-19; Dkt. 232, ¶¶ 16-19; Dkt. 212-3 at 227 *et seq.* (PX87, EduTrek Articles of Incorporation); Dkt. 212-5 (PX126, Day Pacer’s IRS Form 1065).] In sum, the undisputed facts show that the LLC Defendants engaged in telemarketing as defined by the TSR. Their entire business model depended on being a marketing partner as part of a plan between multiple businesses to connect consumers to various for-profit programs.

In a separate argument, Defendants claim that they did not engage in “telemarketing” because they did not use telephones in any of their conversations with consumers; rather, they used headsets and computers and the calls were all voice over Internet protocol (“VoIP”). Defendants do not cite any authority or offer any explanation for the proposition that VoIP calls should be excluded from the coverage of the TSR. Perfunctory and undeveloped arguments such as this one are waived. See *Britney S. v. Berryhill*, 366 F. Supp. 3d 1022, 1028 (N.D. Ill. 2019) (citing *Crespo v. Colvin*, 824 F.3d 667, 674 (7th Cir. 2016); *Thomas v. Colvin*, 745 F.3d 802, 807-808 (7th Cir. 2014)). In addition, as the FTC noted, the limited case law on this

question strongly suggests that calls made using VoIP technology are subject to the TSR. See *Dish Network*, 75 F. Supp. 3d at 936 (“Nothing in the TSR limits the TSR’s coverage to residential landlines or excludes wireless or VoIP lines from coverage.”); cf. *FTC v. Educare Ctr. Servs., Inc.*, 433 F. Supp. 3d 1008, 1019 (W.D. Tex. 2020) (VoIP provider that allegedly participated in deceptive telemarketing scheme could be held liable under the TSR’s “substantial assistance” provision; VoIP provider was not covered by exemption from liability for “common carriers”).

b. Did the LLC Defendants have actual knowledge or knowledge fairly implied under the circumstances that their business model was subject to the TSR?

In order to be held liable for civil penalties, it is not enough that the LLC Defendants were responsible for initiating calls to numbers on the Do Not Call List. Instead, the FTC must show that the LLC Defendants had “actual knowledge or knowledge fairly implied on the basis of objective circumstances that such act is unfair or deceptive and is prohibited by such rule.” 15 U.S.C. § 45(m)(1)(A). This language provides a “mistake-of-law defense to civil liability.” *Jerman v. Carlisle, McNellie, Rini, Kramer & Ulrich LPA*, 559 U.S. 573, 583-84 (2010); see also *Dish Network*, 954 F.3d at 978 (“§ 45(m)(1)(A) includes a variation on an ignorance-of-the-law defense”). “Whether a defendant has violated a rule with actual or implied knowledge is based on objective factors. A defendant is responsible where a reasonable person under the circumstances would have known of the existence of the provision and that the action charged violated that provision.”

United States v. National Financial Services, Inc., 98 F.3d 131, 139 (4th Cir. 1996) (applying 15 U.S.C. § 45(m)(1)(A)) (citing S.Rep. No. 1408, 93rd Cong., 2nd Sess. 4, 1974 U.S.C.C.A.N. 1772); see also 1974 U.S.C.C.A.N. 7755, 7772 (“In determining whether knowledge of a Commission rule may be fairly implied, it is intended that the courts hold a defendant responsible where a reasonable and prudent man under the circumstances would have known of the existence of the rule and that the act or practice was in violation of its provisions.”); *United States v. Dish Network LLC*, 256 F. Supp. 3d 810, 929-30 (C.D. Ill. 2017), *rev’d in part on other grounds*, 954 F.3d 970 (7th Cir. 2020); *United States v. Commercial Recovery Systems, Inc.*, 179 F. Supp. 3d 728, 737 (E.D. Tex. 2016).

Defendants claim they did not know, nor did they have any reason to know, that the TSR applied to their businesses. All three of the Individual Defendants, as well as EduTrek’s former president Chad Tatton, attested in their affidavits that they knew about the TCPA but did not know or have reason to know that the TSR applied to their businesses, which they characterize as purely informational calls made to consumers who have consented to receiving such calls. More particularly, Ian Fitzgerald, Day Pacer’s president beginning in 2016, states that in late April 2016 Day Pacer considered expanding into selling goods and services to consumers, but “learned of the provisions of TSR and decided that Day Pacer would not transition its business from one governed by the TCPA to one governed by the TSR.” [Dkt. 219-3, ¶ 23.] Raymond says the same. [Dkt. 219-4, ¶ 18.]

Cumming states in his affidavit that when “new managers” of Day Pacer suggested in 2016 that “the company take on new clients and make calls intended to induce the purchase of those clients’ goods or services,” he “did some research” (which he does not specifically identify) and “determined that making sales calls would require registration of the company as a telephone solicitor with the State of Utah and would subject the company to regulation under the TSR.” [Dkt. 230-1, ¶ 15.] He “suggested that management review those regulations” and “opposed changing the company’s business model to include telemarketing because of the additional regulation and risk that would be involved.” [*Id.*] Cumming believed that “the TSR applies only to telephone calls intended to induce the purchase of goods or services.” [*Id.*, ¶ 18.] He also emphasized that the LLC Defendants never established goals for sales or the conversion of leads by the schools with which the LLC Defendants contracted. [*Id.*, ¶¶ 19-20.]

The individual Defendants provide no details concerning the research that Cumming (or any other attorneys) performed or why it led them to believe that Day Pacer was exempt from the TSR. To the extent that Cumming’s research consisted of reading the FTC guidance that Defendants rely on in their summary judgment briefs, no reasonable and prudent person under the circumstances would have concluded that they authorized Defendants’ telemarketing activity. Further, Defendants do not explain how they could reasonably have known they were subject to the TCPA, which applies to a “telephone solicitor” that initiates calls “for the purpose of encouraging the purchase . . . of . . . goods, or services,” but not to the TSR, which applies to a “telemarketer” that initiates calls

“in connection with” “a plan, program, or campaign which is conducted to induce the purchase of goods or services.” *Compare* 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200(f)(15), *with* 16 C.F.R. § 310.2(ff)-(gg).

The LLC Defendants received complaints from consumers, as well as from operators of the websites from which they purchased phone numbers, that they were initiating calls to phone numbers on the DNC registry. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 30; Dkt. 232, ¶ 30.] Defendants also received complaints from schools and other lead purchasers and their compliance companies that they were initiating calls to consumers without collecting proper express written authorization to be contacted. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 33; Dkt. 232, ¶ 33.] At least one major lead purchaser, EducationDynamics, refused to work with the LLC Defendants because it was concerned that their consumer data sources, such as websites, did not properly collect consumers’ consent to be contacted. [*Id.*] Defendants admit that the LLC Defendants “continued to purchase consumer data generated from websites after receiving complaints regarding those websites depending on the particular complaint.” [Dkt. 212-9 at 124 (response to request to admit no. 16).]

Defendants’ argument that they did not understand the TSR’s definition of “telemarketing” is comparable to a “mistake of law” argument that the Seventh Circuit considered and rejected in *Dish*. Dish argued that it lacked the knowledge necessary to be liable for civil penalties for calls made to its former customers, because “it did not know that it lacked an ‘established business relationship’ with customers who had stopped paying their bills before DISH disconnected their service (a mistake of law).” *Dish*

Network, 954 F.3d at 978. Dish maintained that it did not know the legal definition of “established business relationship” under the FTC’s rules, because an FTC comment that accompanied the rule purportedly suggested that Dish could start the 18-month time limit for calling former customers on the date it disconnected a customer’s service, even if that date came after the customer’s subscription expired for lack of payment. *Id.* at 979. The Seventh Circuit agreed with the district court that the text of the rule required the 18-month clock to start from the date of the customer’s last payment. The Seventh Circuit found that the rule was not ambiguous and that to the extent the FTC’s comments were inconsistent with the TSR’s text, “the text prevails,” rejecting Dish’s “mistake of law” defense. *Id.* Likewise, in this case, Defendants misread the FCC’s commentary on “purely informational calls,” the TSR is not ambiguous, and Defendants are not entitled to take the mistake of law defense to a jury.

c. Did the LLC Defendants limit their telemarketing to consumers who solicited and consented to receiving calls about for-profit educational opportunities?

Defendants argue that they are not subject to the TSR or any requirements to scrub calling lists against the Do Not Call List because the LLC Defendants only called consumers who solicited a conversation with them. Defendants begin with the statute that authorized the FTC to promulgate the TSR, 15 U.S.C. § 6102(a)(3)(A). This provision requires the FTC to include in its rules “a requirement that telemarketers may not undertake a pattern of unsolicited telephone calls which the reasonable

consumer would consider coercive or abusive of such consumer's right to privacy." *Id.* Defendants contend that this provision limits the FTC's regulatory authority to "unsolicited" telephone calls. [Dkt. 227 at 18.] Defendants also rely on the TSR's use of the term "initiate." Under the TSR, "[i]t is an abusive telemarketing act or practice and a violation of this Rule for a telemarketer to engage in, or for a seller to cause a telemarketer to engage in . . . (iii) *Initiating* any outbound telephone call to a person when: . . . (B) That person's telephone number is on the 'do-not-call' registry, maintained by the Commission, of persons who do not wish to receive outbound telephone calls to induce the purchase of goods or services *unless* the seller or telemarketer" can demonstrate that the seller either (1) "has obtained the express agreement, in writing, of such person to place calls to that person"; or (2) "has an established business relationship with such person, and that person has not stated that he or she does not wish to receive outbound telephone calls under paragraph (b)(1)(iii)(A) of this section." 16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B) (emphasis added). Defendants claim that the FTC used the word "initiate" to "distinguish[] between the Congressionally intended prohibited unsolicited calls to consumers and the consumer solicited calls that were not to be prohibited." [Dkt. 227 at 20.] According to Defendants, all of their calls fall into the first bucket.

The Court is not persuaded by Defendants' reading of the statute to impose a burden on the FTC to show that calls to numbers on the DNC Registry were "unsolicited." The language of the TSR, as part of the larger regulatory scheme, makes it clear that a telemarketer initiates a call

when it places an outbound call. And a telemarketer violates the TSR when, as here, the telemarketer initiates, that is, places, an outbound call to a phone number on the Do Not Call List. To construe the word “initiate,” undefined in the federal rule here, the Court looks to the canons of statutory interpretation. See *Kisor v. Wilkie*, 139 S. Ct. 2400, 2419 (2019) (“[A] court must apply all traditional methods of interpretation to any rule, and must enforce the plain meaning those methods uncover.”); see also, e.g., *Nat’l Ass’n of Home Builders v. Defenders of Wildlife*, 551 U.S. 644, 668-69 (2007) (invoking the canon against surplusage in interpretation of regulation); *Long Island Care at Home, Ltd. v. Coke*, 551 U.S. 158, 170 (2007) (invoking the canon that the specific governs the general). The Court starts with the plain meaning of the statute’s text. See *Barnhart v. Sigmon Coal Co.*, 534 U.S. 438, 450 (2002). The “first step . . . is to determine whether the language at issue has a plain and unambiguous meaning with regard to the particular dispute in the case.” *Robinson v. Shell Oil Co.*, 519 U.S. 337, 340 (1997). “Where Congress’s intent is clear from that language, it must be given effect.” *Arobelidze v. Holder*, 653 F.3d 513, 518 (7th Cir. 2011) (citing *Chevron, U.S.A., Inc. v. Natural Res. Def. Council, Inc.*, 467 U.S. 837, 842-43 (1984)). The plain language of the TSR makes it clear that to “initiate” a call means to place such a call. It’s as simple as that. It is a violation of the TSR to make an outbound call to someone on the do not call registry unless the telemarketer or seller “[c]an demonstrate” that “the seller has obtained the express agreement, in writing, of such person to place calls to that person.” 16 C.F.R. § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B)(1).

Defendants cannot demonstrate that they have obtained such consent. It is undisputed that neither Defendants nor their dialing vendors owned the websites from which the LLC Defendants purchased phone numbers. Defendants acknowledge that the websites collecting consumer information sold those phone numbers to the company willing to pay the highest price—here, the LLC Defendants. The record does not contain screenshots or other contemporaneous evidence to establish the contents of the websites on which the customers supposedly provided express written consent. In short, the record simply does not support Defendants’ position that customers invited and solicited calls from the yet unknown highest bidder purchasing their contact information.

Defendants’ primary evidence of “consent” is their call records, which purport to identify the URLs, or website locations, where the consumers entered their phone numbers. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 107; Dkt. 232, ¶ 106.] However, Defendants have not demonstrated that the URLs lead to pages collecting valid written consents. By contrast, the FTC reviewed a random sample of 750 of the LLC Defendants’ call records to see if the URLs were complete and linked to websites that indicated evidence of consent. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 108; Dkt. 232, ¶ 107.] This review indicated that in nearly all cases, the URL records were blank, contained text that was not a web page, or did not point to an active web page. Even when they did point to an active web page, they did not contain any language about telephone calls. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 109; Dkt. 232, ¶ 108.] Defendants criticize how this analysis was performed, primarily because it looked at the webpages as they currently exist rather than using the Wayback Machine to view the webpages as of the dates that the consumers viewed them when the

consent was gathered. [See Dkt. 241 at 11-12.] But *Defendants* have the burden to show consent. Here, besides a handful of call transcripts indicating that some customers were interested in the educational opportunities they marketed [see Dkt. 241 at 9; Dkts. 241-2 through 241-15], Defendants have no evidence that consumers wanted to receive calls from the LLC Defendants and their dialing vendors or consented to receiving such calls.

By contrast, records identified by the FTC support its position that the LLC Defendants did not have valid consent. Consumers entered their contact information on websites primarily focused on job opportunities, not education. Defendants dispute this based on generic hearsay and authentication grounds, but fail to discuss the particular evidence offered by the FTC or other evidence establishing the websites' contents. [See 229, ¶ 24.] Several of the statements come from the LLC Defendants' own employees in the course of their employment, which do not constitute hearsay. See Fed. R. Evid. 801(d)(2)(D) (hearsay does not include a statement offered against an opposing party that "was made by the party's agent or employee on a matter within the scope of that relationship and while it existed"); *Stepp v. Covance Central Laboratory Services, Inc.*, 931 F.3d 632 (7th Cir. 2019). For instance, EduTrek's director of lead generation, Nathan Clegg, testified that job search websites were "the most common type of website where [EduTrek] would receive a lead." [Dkt. 212-7 at 214 (Tr. 28:12-21) (PX309)]. Similarly, Lon Kennard, who was vice president of operations for EduTrek, wrote in a November 2014 email to employees that "[m]any of our leads come from job boards (or similar sites)" and that "these people may not have read/understood the statement asking if they would like a

phone call from us regarding their education.” [Dkt. 212-3 at 111 (PX37).]

Finally, in further support of their consent argument Defendants point to the fact that consumers consented to their calls being transferred between the dialing vendors and Day Pacer and therefore they could have avoided the call. But by that point, the train had left the station. The dialing vendors had already initiated a call to a number on the Do Not Call List. Whether the consumers then agreed to be transferred does not show that the dialing vendors somehow had consent to call the consumers in the first place. Viewing the record as a whole and in the light most favorable to Defendants, Defendants fail to show that they only called consumers who solicited and consented to receiving calls about for-profit educational opportunities.

d. Did the LLC Defendants have actual knowledge or knowledge fairly implied under the circumstances that they did not have valid consent to call numbers that appear on the Do Not Call Registry?

The undisputed record, viewed in the light most favorable to Defendants, shows at a minimum that Defendants had knowledge fairly implied under the circumstances that there were not valid written consents for at least a portion of the numbers they purchased and dialed, yet did not take any steps to safeguard against this problem or comply with the TSR.

Defendants admit that they received complaints from schools and other lead purchasers—including their compliance companies—that the LLC Defendants and their

dialing vendors were calling consumers without proper consent. Dkt. 229, ¶ 33; Dkt. 232, ¶ 33. For example, one of the educational institutions that bought leads from Day Pacer submitted an incident report to them noting that the registration path to enter consumer information on the job search site lacked a necessary disclaimer that it was a separate educational offer, and that there was no opt out option. [Dkt. 212-6 at 219 *et seq.* (PX222, Corinthian Colleges email).] Another lead purchaser, Education Dynamics, emailed Day Pacer indicating they had reviewed the contact information forms included on various websites. [Dkt. 212-6 at 136 *et seq.* (PX180).] According to the email from Education Dynamics, the forms did not comply with consent requirements that would allow for phone calls. [*Id.*]

In sum, the summary judgment record shows no material factual dispute that the LLC Defendants initiated at least 3,669,914 calls to phone numbers on the Do Not Call List; that at least some of these calls were interstate [PSOF ¶ 40; DSOF at 27, ¶ 40]; and that Defendants did not maintain records sufficient to demonstrate that it obtained valid consent for all or any portion of its calls to numbers on the Do Not Call List. The summary judgment record belies any claim that Defendants did not know—or that a reasonably prudent person would not know—that they were not getting valid consents. The FTC is entitled to summary judgment on Count 1 to the extent it is based on calls made by the LLC Defendants and their dialers.

4. Liability for Calls Made by the IBT Partners

The FTC also seeks to impose liability on Defendants for calls placed by their IBT Partners. It is undisputed that between March 22, 2014 and June 12, 2019, the IBT Partners transferred 498,597 calls to the LLC Defendants that were the product of outbound telephone calls to numbers on the DNC Registry (20% of the total inbound transfers received from IBT Partners during that period). [Dkt. 229, ¶ 41; Dkt. 232, ¶ 41.] It is also undisputed that the IBT Partners made an additional approximately 39,847,000 calls to DNC numbers, which did not result in inbound transfers to the LLC Defendants. [*Id.*]

The FTC advances two alternative theories for holding the LLC Defendants liable for these calls: First, that the IBT Partners were acting as Day Pacer’s agents when they called numbers on the DNC Registry, making Day Pacer liable as principal; and second, that Day Pacer assisted and facilitated the IBT Partners’ violations. The FTC moves for summary judgment on both theories of liability, in the alternative. [See Dkt. 211 at 18-19.]

The FTC asserts three theories of agency liability: actual, implied, and by ratification. Whether an agency relationship exists is normally a question of fact, *Clarendon Nat. Ins. Co. v. Medina*, 645 F.3d 928, 935 (7th Cir. 2011), which requires the Court to examine (1) whether the IBT Partners “act on [the LLC Defendants’] behalf and (2) whether they are subject to its control.” *F.T.C. v. Lifewatch Inc.*, 176 F. Supp. 3d 757, 773 (N.D. Ill. 2016). The FTC has not provided enough details about the various IBT Partners, or the specific complaints that the LLC Defendants received about them, to allow the Court to

conclude as a matter of law that any or all of the IBT Partners were the LLC Defendant's agents.

For instance, the FTC cites to a model inbound transfer agreement (PX10), but does not explain whether any, all, or some subset of the IBT Partners are subject to that agreement. Nor does the FTC elaborate on the level of control that the model agreement—or the parties' actual practice—gives the LLC Defendants over the IBT Partners' operations. Although it is undisputed that the LLC Defendants provided *some* of the IBT Partners with telephone numbers, scripts, and other support, it is not apparent from the record if this was the typical arrangement or less common. To the extent that the FTC's theories of agency liability depend on the LLC Defendants knowing about and ratifying particular misconduct by their IBT Partners, the record generally lacks the granular detail necessary to make such a determination.

The FTC has traced a clearer path to liability on its alternative "assisting and facilitating" claim. As explained in the next paragraph, the Court agrees with the FTC that it has satisfied its burden to show that the LLC Defendants assisted and facilitated at least one IBT Partners' violations of the TSR. The FTC is therefore entitled to summary judgment on Count II. Pursuant to the Seventh Circuit's decision in *Dish*, the FTC is entitled to judgment on only one theory of liability, at least absent any attempt by the FTC to distinguish between the various IBT Partners. See *Dish Network*, 954 F.3d at 978 ("When an entity is vicariously responsible for another's acts (as a corporation is vicariously for the acts of its employees, and DISH is vicariously responsible for the acts of the order-entry retailers), it makes little sense to treat

the entity as assisting itself. It would take clearer language than § 310.3(b) to support such a conclusion. The district court therefore should not have held DISH liable for ‘substantially assisting’ its own agents.”). Therefore, Defendants are entitled to summary judgment on Count I to the extent that it is based on calls placed by the IBT Partners.

Turning to Count II, liability for assisting and facilitating telemarketers’ calls to DNC Numbers requires: 1) providing substantial assistance or support to the telemarketer; and 2) knowing or consciously avoiding knowing that the telemarketer is engaged in any act or practice that violates Section 310.4 of the TSR, including initiating calls to DNC Numbers. 16 C.F.R. § 310.3(b). The first element “does not impose a demanding standard, as it requires only that the assistance be ‘more than mere casual or incidental dealing with a seller or telemarketer that is unrelated to the violation of the Rule.’” *F.T.C. v. Consumer Health Benefits Ass’n*, 2011 WL 3652248, at *5 (E.D.N.Y. Aug. 18, 2011) (quoting TSR, 60 Fed. Reg. 43842-01, 43852 (FTC, Aug. 23, 1995) (statement of basis and purpose)); see also *United States v. Dish Network*, 667 F. Supp. 2d 952, 961 (C.D. Ill. 2009); *F.T.C. v. Consumer Health Benefits Ass’n*, 2012 WL 1890242, at *6 (E.D.N.Y. May 23, 2012); *F.T.C. v. HES Merchant Services Co., Inc.*, 2014 WL 6863506, at *7-8 (M.D. Fla. Nov. 18, 2014). Put slightly differently, the FTC simply must show “a connection between the assistance provided and the resulting violations of the core provisions of the TSR.” *Dish Network*, 667 F. Supp. 2d at 961.

In this case, the undisputed evidence shows that the LLC Defendants paid the IBT Partners to make calls and

transfer leads to them. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 43; Dkt. 232, ¶ 43.] “[N]o assistance could be more substantial or more directly connected to the core violations of the TSR than paying someone to commit the acts that violated the TSR.” *Dish Network*, 667 F. Supp. 2d at 961. The undisputed evidence also shows that Defendants knew or consciously avoided knowing that at least one of its IBT Partners was violating the TSR. “Knowledge or conscious avoidance of knowledge may be inferred when the person providing assistance receives complaints about violations.” *Consumer Health Benefits Ass’n*, 2011 WL 3652248, at *5 (citing *Dish Network*, 667 F. Supp. 2d at 961). The FTC has demonstrated that the LLC Defendants continued to pay and work with IBT Partners even after receiving complaints from schools, consumers, and compliance monitoring companies that their IBT Partners were calling DNC Numbers without consent. [See Dkt. 229, ¶ 42; Dkt. 232, ¶ 42; Dkt. 212-9 at 124 (PX521, response to request to admit no. 15).] The FTC also provides at least one specific example: Defendants continued working with IBT Partner Bluewater despite repeated complaints and compliance notices. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 42 (citing Dkt. 212-6 at 118 (PX175), 124 (PX177), 129 (PX178), 133 (PX179); Dkt. 212-7 at 168 (PX307); Dkt. 212-9 at 25 (PX508), 118 (PX521); Dkt. 212-10 at 315 (PX593)).] Defendants do not substantively dispute anything about the Bluewater example. [See Dkt. 229, ¶ 42; Dkt. 232, ¶ 42.] The emails and other records cited by the FTC show that Defendants continued working with Bluewater despite repeated complaints and compliance notices. Day Pacer did not terminate the relationship; rather, Bluewater “just kind of disappeared one day.” [*Id.*] A few months later, Day Pacer started a new relationship with XactCall Inc.,

which like Bluewater was operated by Paul Flannery. [*Id.*] The FTC has also introduced call records showing that numerous consumers called by the IBT Partners were not interested in education or in speaking with the LLC Defendants at all. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 50; Dkt. 232, ¶ 50.]

Based on the undisputed record, the FTC is entitled to summary judgment on its substantial assistance claim. The Court finds it unnecessary to determine whether the LLC Defendants substantially assisted each and every one of the IBT Partners, because the FTC does not seek civil penalties based on calls made by the IBT Partners, and its proposed injunction [see Dkt. 211-1] does not contain any provisions concerning the IBT Partners. It is enough for purposes of determining liability that the FTC has shown that the LLC Defendants substantially assisted Blue Water’s violations of the TSR.

5. Liability of the Individual Defendants

The FTC seeks to hold the Individual Defendants liable for TSR violations committed by the LLC Defendants. “To impose individual liability on the basis of a corporate practice, the Commission must prove (1) that the practice violated the FTCA; (2) that the individual ‘either participated directly in the deceptive acts or practices or had authority to control them’; and (3) that the individual ‘knew or should have known about the deceptive practices.’” *FTC v. Credit Bureau Center, LLC*, 937 F.3d 764, 769 (7th Cir. 2019) (quoting *FTC v. World Media Brokers*, 415 F.3d 758, 764 (7th Cir. 2005)); see also *FTC v. Pacific First Benefit, LLC*, 472 F. Supp. 2d 974, 980 (N.D. Ill. 2007). The FTC is “not required to prove subjective intent to defraud.” *World Media Brokers*, 415 F.3d at 764.

The FTC has satisfied the first element by showing that the LLC Defendants initiated millions of calls to numbers on the Do Not Call Registry. It has satisfied the second element, too, because the undisputed facts in the record also show that each of the Individual Defendants either participated directly in the deceptive acts or practices or had authority to control them—Ian by running Day Pacer, and Raymond and Cumming by advising when the LLC Defendants were faced with strategic business decisions and legal complaints.

More particularly, Ian served as President of Day Pacer beginning June 1, 2015. In that role, he was responsible for the day-to-day operation of the company, including hiring and firing employees, signing contracts, and responding to compliance issues. He was responsible for the company's profitability and had access to its bank accounts and accounting records. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 70.] Ian understood the laws and regulations applicable to his businesses. As evidence of this, on October 13, 2015, he wrote an email to Brett Larsen and Nate Clegg about a lawsuit filed by a consumer against EduTrek and opined: "We should sit down with Blake this Friday and talk about how this could have happened if it did. We need to make sure our system is not calling DNC numbers ever." [Dkt. 229, ¶ 81.]

Raymond was a managing member of both EduTrek and Day Pacer. [Dkt. 227-6, ¶ 5.] As a managing member, he was required to "devote the time and effort as is reasonably required in the business of the company" and to "do and perform all . . . acts as may be necessary to or appropriate to the conduct of the Company's business." [Dkt. 229, ¶ 75.] He invested money, reviewed monthly

and quarterly financial statements, met or refused to meet capital calls, and occasionally received distributions. [*Id.*] He also reviewed contracts entered into by the LLC Defendants. Raymond claims that he did not have the expertise or the time to be more involved. [Dkt. 227-6, ¶ 6.] He admits, though, that he “was consulted with respect to claims that threatened lawsuits,” including ones involving violations of the TCPA, but claims they were all “false” and “stick-ups.” [*Id.* ¶¶ 9-13; see also Dkt. 229, ¶ 90.] Clegg testified that he would go to Raymond if a consumer complained that either company had violated the TCPA. [*Id.* ¶ 92.]

Cumming was a corporate manager of EduTrek and Day Pacer, along with Raymond. [Dkt. 230-1, ¶ 10(c).] Cumming discussed Day Pacer’s business model, sales tactics, strategic direction, as well as industry statistics, with Ian and Raymond. [Dkt. 232, ¶ 71.] Cumming understood the laws and regulations applicable to his businesses, including the TSRA and the TRS, and provided legal guidance to the LLC Defendants concerning how those laws applied. [See *id.*, ¶ 80; Dkt. 230-1, ¶¶ 12, 14-18.]

The undisputed evidence in the record also shows that each of the Individual Defendants knew or should have known their businesses were subject to the TSR but that they were not making any attempt to comply. Since 2012, the contracts that Raymond has reviewed represented and warranted to schools and lead purchasers that the LLC Defendants (or their IBT partners) would comply with applicable federal laws including the TSR and the TCPA. [Dkt. 229, ¶¶ 36, 65, 90.] Despite this representa-

tion, the Individual Defendants knew that the LLC Defendants did not subscribe to or access the national DNC registry. [*Id.*, ¶ 86; Dkt. 232, ¶ 85.] All three Individual Defendants admit to knowing about the TCPA, which is substantially similar to the TSR. Cumming was involved in “roughly half a dozen claims and class actions against the companies based on the TCPA,” including ones that asserted that the LLC Defendants had called numbers on the DNC Registry. [Dkt. 230-1, ¶ 12.].

All three Individual Defendants admit that they learned about the TSR as early as 2016, when “new managers” suggested that Day Pacer take on new clients and “make calls intended to induce the purchase of those clients’ goods or services.” [Dkt. 230-1, ¶ 15 (Cumming); Dkt. 219-3, ¶ 23 (Ian); Dkt. 219-4, ¶ 18 (Raymond).] Cumming “did some research” and determined that a change in business model would “subject the company to regulation under the TSR.” [Dkt. 230-1, ¶ 15.] Defendants should have known by that time, at the latest, that they were failing to comply with the TSR.

Even if Cumming’s purported research had not put them on notice, complaining consumers, compliance reports, and the FTC’s investigative activities should have. See *United States v. Lasseter*, 2005 WL 1638735, at *5 (M.D. Tenn. June 30, 2005) (defendants’ knowledge fairly inferred because FTC had been in contact about potential rule violations three years prior). For instance, in 2014, Cumming and Raymond both learned of an article by David Halperin claiming that EduTrek called individuals who had given their name and telephone number in response to deceptive websites. [Dkt. 230-1, ¶ 13; Dkt. 229,

¶ 89; Dkt. 212-3 at 88-96.] Ian Fitzgerald regularly received reports from the compliance company Omniangle indicating that the websites Day Pacer received consumer information from did not obtain consumers' consent. The FTC also points to a variety of emails in which the Individual Defendants discussed their concerns about the validity of customer consent. For instance, in a March 2016 email Cumming raised with Raymond and Ian what he called "conditional consent," writing: "By opting in on a site advertising at home business opportunities, is the opter consenting to a call about further education. It is unfortunate that we have the potential conditional consent issue but oh, well." [Dkt. 229, ¶ 82; Dkt. 232, ¶ 81; see also Dkt. 212-6 at 100.] And in a November 2016 email, Cumming expressly recognized the risk that the TSR may apply to calls made by IBT Partners. Responding to Raymond's email regarding a consumer who complained that he was called by a Day Pacer IBT Partner (Bluewater) and transferred to Day Pacer, Cumming advised that he was "not certain any FTC or FCC or TCP provision applies but, if Blue Water was determined to be an agent, it might" and "the only colorable regulation would be the FTC TSR." [Dkt. 212-6 at 97.] He continued that "[l]ess likely but more scary is the FTC telemarketing sales rule," under which the FTC "can assess a penalty of \$40,000 per violation." [*Id.*] Cumming also acknowledges in his affidavit that he knew since 2014 that some of the calls in which the LLC Defendants engaged were "transferred from call centers in the Philippines" and "had some concern about whether those call centers might be obtaining names and numbers using deceptive websites and thought the names and numbers so obtained could not be considered consensual." [Dkt. 230-1, ¶ 14.]

By April 2016, the Individual Defendants became aware that the FTC was investigating them for illegal practices. The FTC issued Civil Investigative Demands to EduTrek L.L.C. in April 2016 and to both Day Pacer LLC and EduTrek L.L.C. in April 2017, expressly seeking TSR compliance information. [Dkt. 229, ¶ 84.] All of this evidence undermines Defendants’ position that they only called individuals (or thought they only called individuals) who provided valid, express consent in compliance with the TSR.

In sum, the summary judgment record shows that that the Individual Defendants knew or should have known about the LLC Defendants’ deceptive practices. All three of the Individual Defendants: knew of the TSR and the penalties it imposed; knew that consumers were complaining about receiving calls from the LLC Defendants and IBT Partners despite having their numbers registered on the DNC List; and knew or should have known that the “consents” that they and the IBT Partners obtained from customers were not valid. The FTC has therefore established that the Individual Defendants should be held liable for the LLC Defendants’ TSR violations.

6. Remedies

The FTC seeks both civil penalties and injunctive relief against the LLC Defendants and the Individual Defendants.

a. Injunctive Relief

Section 13(b) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 53(b), provides that “in proper cases the Commission may seek, and

after proper proof, the court may issue, a permanent injunction.” See *FTC v. Febre*, 128 F.3d 530, 534 (7th Cir. 1997) (entering permanent injunction under Section 13(b)). The FTC “need only show that there is a reasonable likelihood of future violations” to obtain an injunction under Section 13(b). *FTC v. Credit Bureau Ctr. LLC*, 325 F. Supp. 3d 852, 867 (N.D. Ill. 2018), *aff’d in part, vacated in part*, 937 F.3d 764, 770 (7th Cir. 2019). In deciding whether to issue an injunction, the Court considers: (1) the gravity of the harm, (2) the extent of [Defendants’] participation, (3) the nature of the infraction and the likelihood that they may become involved in similar conduct in the future; (4) any recognition of culpability; and (5) the sincerity of assurances against further violations. *SEC v. Holschuh*, 694 F.2d 130, 144 (7th Cir. 1982). Further, individuals can be held liable for injunctive relief under the FTC Act if they either participated in the acts or practices or had authority to control them. *FTC v. Think Achievement Corp.*, 144 F. Supp. 2d 993, 1011 (N.D. Ind. 2000), *aff’d* 312 F.3d 259 (7th Cir. 2002).

The Court is inclined to issue injunctive relief against the LLC Defendants and Ian and Raymond Fitzgerald, for the same essential reasons that the Fitzgeralds are properly held responsible for the acts of the LLC Defendants. But given the age of the case, and Defendants’ suggestion that the industry has changed significantly due to major players in the for-profit education industry going out of business, the Court will require updated information from the parties before determining the proper scope of any injunctive relief. Additionally, since Mr. Cumming is deceased, and the Estate has no role in the affairs of the LLC Defendants, the Court intends to deny injunctive relief as to the Estate.

b. Civil penalties

Section 5(m)(1)(A) authorizes the imposition of civil penalties against parties that violate FTC trade regulation rules, including the TSR, “with actual knowledge or knowledge fairly implied on the basis of objective circumstances that such act is unfair or deceptive and is prohibited by such rule.” 15 U.S.C. § 45(m)(1)(A); *Commercial Recovery Systems*, 179 F. Supp. 3d at 737 (awarding civil penalties against owner and president on summary judgment). As discussed above, the FTC has demonstrated that both the LLC Defendants and the Individual Defendants violated the TSR with actual knowledge or implied knowledge based on objective factors. Therefore, the FTC is entitled to seek civil penalties against them.

In determining the amount of the civil penalty, the Court is required to “take into account the degree of culpability, any history of prior such conduct, ability to pay, effect on ability to continue to do business, and such other matters as justice may require.” 15 U.S.C. § 45(m)(1)(C); see also *Dish Network*, 954 F.3d at 980. Further, in *Dish*, the Seventh Circuit advised that even where a statute, like the FTC Act, “permit[s] consideration of wealth,” “the best way” to ensure that the penalty is “within a constitutionally allowable range” is to “start from the harm rather than [the] wealth” of the Defendant, “then add an appropriate multiplier, after the fashion of the antitrust laws (treble damages) or admiralty (double damages), to reflect the fact that many violations are not caught and penalized.” *Id.*

Here, the FTC seeks an award of civil penalties in the amount of \$28,681,863.88—“substantially less than the maximum allowable civil penalty that is in excess of \$100

billion.” [Dkt. 211 at 36.] This works out to \$6.88 per call for 4,168,511 violations. The FTC explains that the \$28.6 million figure is “equal to Defendants’ gross revenue during the applicable period” of March 22, 2014 to June 12, 2019. [*Id.* at 40.] The FTC seeks to hold the LLC Defendants and the Individual Defendants jointly liable for this amount and has submitted a brief discussing each of the factors that the FTC Act requires the Court to consider before imposing a penalty. [See Dkt. 211 at 36-40.]

The LLC Defendants and the Fitzgeralds respond, in sum, that (1) because they did not violate the TSR they are not liable for civil penalties; (2) the amount is arbitrary, capricious, and premature; (3) the FTC did not provide its calculation for the requested penalty; (4) the amount is intended to destitute the Defendants; and (5) the FTC must prove every conversation that violated the TSR and the fine that applied during that time period. [See Dkt. 241 at 24-25.] Cumming argues that the amount proposed by the FTC is so excessive it would reduce the Defendants to extreme poverty. [Dkt. 239 at 10-11]. He also asserts that his “good faith belief” that the TSR did not apply to Day Pacer’s activities precludes civil penalties. [*Id.* at 10-11.] All of these assertions are incorrect and unsupported.

Defendants provide no authority for the bald assertion that in order to attach civil penalties the FTC must prove every individual conversation that violated the TSR. [Dkt. 241.] Nonetheless, the summary judgment record in fact includes admissions that Defendants violated the TSR millions of times—directly contradicting their arguments against civil penalties and showing a high degree of culpability. As noted, many of the FTC’s Rule 56.1 facts

have been admitted because Defendants failed to properly dispute the statement and, in many cases, failed to point to any evidence or citations in the record. As the FTC points out, it is undisputed that the LLC Defendants violated the TSR at least 4,168,511 times. [Dkt. 211 at n. 20; Dkt. 229 at ¶ 26; (deemed admitted); Dkt. 232 at ¶ 26 (deemed admitted)].

Nor is it true that the FTC has failed to provide a calculation for its proposed penalties. The FTC explained that the proposed penalties correspond to the proceeds from the misconduct. [Dkt. 211 at 36-40.] The amount, \$28,681,863.88, corresponds to the Defendants' gross revenue during the relevant period (EduTrek's revenue from March 2014 to October 2015 at \$10,709,181.11 and Day Pacer's revenue from November 2015 to June 2019 at \$17,972,682.77). [*Id.* at 40; Dkt. 229, ¶ 64 (deemed admitted); Dkt. 232, ¶ 64 (admitted).] And for further context on the calculation, the FTC provided a detailed calculation of the maximum allowable penalties based on the specific years of the violations and the corresponding civil penalty amount for those ranges of time—2,548,695 violations from 2014 to 2016 at \$16,000 per violation, 366,626 violations from 2016 to 2017 at \$40,000 per violation, 592,650 violations from January 24, 2017 to January 21, 2018 at \$40,654 per violation, 507,894 violations from January 22, 2018 to February 13, 2019 at a rate of \$41,484, and 152,646 violations from February 2019 forward at \$42,530 per violation. [Dkt. 211 at 36-40.] The FTC has established that both the LLC Defendants and the individual Defendants had knowledge fairly implied that their conduct violated the TSR, such that the FTC is entitled to a substantial civil penalty.

The Court is inclined to impose the requested penalty for the reasons given above. Before reaching a final determination on the amount, however, the Court will require some additional information. Substantial time has passed since the parties briefed the issue and this ruling, and the Court does not have current information on some important matters. For example, the Court is uninformed about whether Day Pacer (or any successor) is still doing business in any capacity, and the Court requires more information about Defendants' ability to pay and the effect any penalty would have on an ability to continue to do business. For this reason, the Court stays a final judgment on the issue of civil penalties subject to a hearing.

IV. Conclusion

For these reasons, the FTC's motion for substitution [Dkt. 247] is granted. The Estate is substituted as a defendant in this action. The FTC's motion for summary judgment [Dkt. 211] and the Defendants' two cross-motions for summary judgment [Dkts. 227, 230], are each granted in part and denied in part. The Court grants summary judgment in favor of the FTC and against Defendants on Count I to the extent that count is based on calls initiated by the LLC Defendants. Summary judgment is granted in favor of Defendants and against the FTC on Count I to the extent that count is based on calls initiated by the IBT Partners. Summary judgment is granted in favor of the FTC and against Defendants on Count II.

Enter: 19-cv-1984

Date: September 1, 2023

[/s/ **Lindsay C. Jenkins**]

Lindsay C. Jenkins

United States District Judge

111a

APPENDIX E

United States Court of Appeals

For the Seventh Circuit

Chicago, Illinois 60604

March 6, 2025

Before

MICHAEL B. BRENNAN, *Circuit Judge*

CANDACE JACKSON-AKIWUMI, *Circuit Judge*

JOSHUA P. KOLAR, *Circuit Judge*

Nos. 23-3310, 24-1273 & 24-1289

FEDERAL TRADE
COMMISSION,

Plaintiff-Appellee,

v.

DAY PACER LLC, et al.,

Defendants-Appellants,

and

MARGARET E. CUM-
MING, in her capacity as
personal representative of
the Estate of David T.
Cumming,

Defendant-Appellant.

Appeals from the United
States District Court for
the Northern District of
Illinois, Eastern Division.

No. 1:19-cv-01984

Lindsay C. Jenkins,
Judge.

112a

O R D E R

On consideration of the petition for rehearing and for rehearing en banc filed by Defendants-Appellants on February 18, 2025, no judge in active service has requested a vote on the petition for rehearing en banc, and the judges on the original panel have voted to deny rehearing.

Accordingly, the petition for rehearing is DENIED.