

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of:)	
Children’s Television)	MD Docket No. 18-202
Programming Rules)	
Modernization of Media)	MD Docket No. 17-105
Regulation Initiative)	

Reply Comment of Disability Consumer Groups and Researchers

The below-listed consumer groups, advocating on behalf of people who are deaf and hard of hearing, respectfully reply to comments on the Commission’s Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in the above-referenced dockets (“FNPRM”).¹ The FNPRM proposes to create a framework in which broadcasters could sponsor Core Programming on another station in the market to meet its children’s programming requirements.

We urge the Commission to again consider our concerns raised in our June 27, 2019 *ex parte*,² addressed in footnote 188 of the FNPRM’s associated Report and Order³—namely, that we do not yet know all the possible accessibility implications of modifications to the children’s television rules. While the Report and Order created a mechanism for addressing our concerns about the possibility of short-form broadcasting opportunities and shifts to multicast programming causing captioning and description shortcomings for children’s programming, we are concerned that the sponsorship exemptions proposed in the FNPRM

¹ Children’s Television Programming Rules, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, MB Docket Nos. 18-202 & 17-105, 34 FCC Rcd. 5822 (July 12, 2019) (“2019 FNPRM”), <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-19-67A1.pdf>.

² *Ex Parte* of TDI et al, Docket No. 18-202, 17-105, 05-231.
<https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/10627122716203/2019.06.27%20Disability%20Consumer%20Groups%20Children's%20Video%20Accessibility%20Ex%20Parte%20final.pdf>

³ 2019 FNPRM, 34 FCC Rcd. at 30, ¶ 47 & n.188.

may have further implications for the accessibility of children's programming for children with visual and hearing disabilities.

For example, Rule § 79.1(d)(12) exempts video programmers from providing closed captions if their annual gross revenue is less than \$3,000,000.⁴ Allowing broadcasters with revenues greater than \$3 million to sponsor stations making less than \$3 million could shift children's programming from stations that are required to caption it to stations that are exempt from the captioning rules, effectively expanding the reach of the categorical exemption beyond its existing bounds. This is only one potential example of problems that could arise if the Commission approaches sponsorship-related modifications to the rules. Thus, the Commission must assess how any changes might create or exacerbate accessibility issues with children's programming.

It remains unclear from the FNPRM or the minimal record developed in response the extent to which special sponsorships might implicate the accessibility of children's television programming. Indeed, only two organizations commented:

- One Ministries, Inc. requested that commercial stations owned by non-profits also be allowed to benefit from sponsorship exemptions.⁵
- America's Public Television Stations, The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and the Public Broadcasting Service ("Public Broadcasters") argued that increased quality, accessibility, and availability of programming should be allowed to satisfy the requirements for sponsorship exemptions.⁶

We agree with the Public Broadcasters that the Commission's sponsorship framework should increase the accessibility of children's programming. The accessibility and availability of children's educational content are paramount to the civil rights of children with visual and

⁴ 47 C.F.R. § 79.1(d)(12).

⁵ Comment of One Ministries, Inc., <https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/filing/10905036985591>

⁶ Comment of America's Public Television Stations, et al. at 2, <https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/filing/10916172895174>.

hearing disabilities. Therefore, the Commission should address our ongoing concern about the accessibility of children's programming in the same way it did in the Report and Order: by requiring the Media Bureau to also assess how any changes to the rules regarding special sponsorships might impact accessibility for children with visual or hearing disabilities when issuing a Public Notice seeking information from broadcasters and viewers.

Respectfully submitted,

Blake E. Reid

Director

Tess Cartin

Jacob Stephens

Kylie A. Thompson

Student Attorneys

Samuelson-Glushko Technology Law & Policy
Clinic (TLPC) • Colorado Law

Counsel to TDI

tlpc@colorado.edu • 303.492.0548

via electronic filing

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Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc. (TDI)

Claude Stout, Executive Director • cstout@TDIforAccess.org

PO Box 8009, Silver Spring, MD 20907

www.TDIforAccess.org

National Association of the Deaf (NAD)

Howard Rosenblum, Chief Executive Officer • howard.rosenblum@nad.org

Contact: Zainab Alkebsi • zainab.alkebsi@nad.org

8630 Fenton Street, Suite 820, Silver Spring, MD 20910

301.587.1788

www.nad.org

Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA)

Barbara Kelley, Executive Director • bkelley@hearingloss.org

Contact: Lise Hamlin, Director of Public Policy, LHamlin@Hearingloss.org

7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1200, Bethesda, MD 20814

301.657.2248

www.hearingloss.org

Association of Late-Deafened Adults (ALDA)

Richard Brown, President • President@alda.org
8038 MacIntosh Lane, Suite 2, Rockford, IL 61107
815.332.1515
www.alda.org

Cerebral Palsy and Deaf Organization (CPADO)

Mark Hill, President • president@cpado.org
14510 Homecrest Road Unit # 3008, Silver Spring, MD 20906
503.512.5066
www.cpado.org

American Association of the Deaf-Blind (AADB)

“The Unstoppable” René G Pellerin, President • renegp@comcast.net
65 Lakeview Terrace, Waterbury Center, VT 05677
802.321.4864
www.aadb.org

California Coalition of Agencies Serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CCASDHH)

Sheri Farinha, Vice Chairperson • sfarinha@norcalcenter.org
4044 N. Freeway Blvd, Sacramento, CA 95834
916.349.7500

American Council of the Blind (ACB)

Clark Rachfal, Director of Advocacy and Governmental Affairs • senyart@afb.org
202.467.5081 • crachfal@acb.org
1703 N. Beauregard Street, Suite 420, Alexandria, VA 22311
www.acb.org

Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on Technology for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Gallaudet University (DHH-RERC)

Twenty-First Century Captioning Disability and Rehabilitation Research Project (Captioning DRRP)

Christian Vogler, PhD • christian.vogler@gallaudet.edu
800 Florida Avenue NE, TAP – SLCC 1116, Washington, DC 20002

Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on Universal Interface & Information Technology Access (IT-RERC)

Gregg Vanderheiden, PhD, Director • greggvander@umd.edu
Trace Research & Development Center • University of Maryland
4130 Campus Drive, College Park, MD 20742

National Technical Institute for the Deaf

Dr. Gerard Buckley, President • gibcfo@ntid.rit.edu

Gary Behm, VP of Academic Affairs • gwbnts@rit.edu

52 Lomb Memorial Drive, Rochester, NY 14623

www.ntid.rit.edu