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April 1, 2019

Honorable Ajit Pai, Chairman

Federal Communications Commission

445 12th Street SE

Washington, DC 20554

Re: Comments to Media Bureau on Video Description Marketplace Improvements (DA 19-40)

Dear Chairman Pai:

I write to you today as a person who has been blind since 1967, has had a career in public administration of programs to benefit blind persons, and who currently volunteers with a number of entities in the pursuit of increased quality of life for person with disabilities.  It is with the perspective I have garnered from the previous that I offer my comments with respect to the FCC, The Congress, and the population for which the 21st Century Communications Video Accessibility Act ( CVAA) was passed and implemented through regulation.

We have indeed come a long way since the passage of the CVAA, and there are many activities across the spectrum of video description that promise even greater levels of full engagement by blinded and other audiences who are the beneficiaries of Descriptive Video Services.  I will only refer to the communications sent to you by the American Council of the Blind, in their comments dated April 1, to make clear my agreement and support of those comments.  What I ask that you keep in mind is the long and difficult struggle that we have had in realizing where we have gotten and the help we need to make the promise of what we have now, become reality in the near future.

Chairman Pai, in 1975 at an FCC Commissioners meeting held in Boston, Massachusetts, I addressed the Commissioners by pointing out that they could take advantage of a great opportunity to purchase the product they wanted most and it was available at these fine stores.  I then left the example without disclosing what fine stores had the product available.  The point was clear; without video description, the value of the advertising was lost both to the stores and to folks who could not see the screen.

Even today, Mr. Chair, there are many instances where the same form of unintended discrimination still occurs!  Even today, a program which aired with video description, can be accessed on demand, but without video description.  In short, we have come a long way, but there remains much work to be done to ensure we have equal access to the information taken for granted by all others.

I implore you, Mr. Chair, to enthusiastically support the increased attention to video description, and the many helpful developments in the field, so that I and others like me will be able to take our rightful place along with our fellow citizens as full beneficiaries of the American Experience.

Sincerely,

Charles Crawford