Hello,

My name is Michael Rodeen, and I use Innocaption extensively in my work life. I lost most of my hearing at 14 months old when I became ill with meningitis. I have graduated from college: Gonzaga University class of 1992 and received an MBA from Portland State University in 2004. I am a licensed Certified Public Accountant in Oregon as well. I underwent two cochlear implant surgeries in 2018 and utilize bluetooth features to help hear on the phone, but it is not enough. I utilized Innocaption services extensively to recive and place calls, and without it, communication at my place of employment becomes that much harder. I have a voice and can “speak” normally in person on the phone, but I also rely heavily on lipreading which I cannot do on a phone in most business phone call situations. You might believe that computer generated speech can work well, but there are two major issues: 1) There is much more of a dealy, and 2) the automated methods requqire the user to speak slowly and concisely. This is unreasonable to ask every single person I speak with to slow down so that a computer can interpret and type what I am hearing.

Lastly, partly due to my own efforts and due to Innocaption, I am able to be a significant contributor in the organization I work for. Not having Innocaption available on the cell puts my employment at risk due to not being able to performe essential fucntions of the job. Already, due to cuts in the Telecommnication Relay Services Fund, I have noticed that I have to place a call multiple times in order to have a captioner available. Or when a business associate is tryint to reach me, they cannot get through becaue Innocaption’s captioners are busy on other calls so they leave a message. Then I try and return the call and again Innocaption’s captioners are busy with other customers.

Please consider restoring and even increasing funding for Telecommunications Relay Services Fund (TRS Fund). This service is an important lifely and generates economic value for this Country. Cutting it off risks cutting off communication. Imagine applying for a job and when the employer tries to call you on the Innocaption Number, and it doesn’t get through because Innocaption cannot provide the caption service. Job Seekers get one chance. Deaf individuals by one estimate already have an unemployment rate by some counts as high as 70%. You don’t want it this high. This needs to come down and reducing funding for this service will not help efforts underway to decrease deaf unemployment. I ask you to do your part to restore this funding that provides an important service and generates value that can be measured.

Thank you for your consideration.

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