

Telecommunications & Individuals Who Are DeafBlind

A Joint Statement

October 27, 2014

To the Federal Communications Commission

The American Association of the Deaf-Blind (AADB) and DeafBlind Citizens in Action (DBCA) are deeply concerned by Purple Communications' recent letter to the Commission announcing its intention to terminate IP-based relay services on November 14, 2014. This announcement is only the latest in a series of notices provided to the Commission in the last 2 years, in which many providers of IP-based relay services ceased their operations.

Purple's recent announcement leaves many consumers who are deafblind with no other alternative to utilize IP-based relay services. The remaining provider, Sprint, provides IP relay that is not accessible for many consumers. Additionally, most consumers lack the means to effectively utilize landline-based services, as well as VRS.

"With the decision of Purple Communications to withdraw from the action of providing IP-Relay services, AADB sees an unnecessary challenge facing the DeafBlind Community. The AADB would like to encourage the FCC to work hard to maintain older and develop newer methods that will benefit the DeafBlind who depend on text relay services. Text based relay is imperative to the DeafBlind Community," says AADB President Mark Gasaway. "We urge the Commission to take all necessary measures to ensure that Americans who are deafblind have access to telecommunications as mandated by Title IV of the ADA and other applicable laws. Accessible telecommunications are essential to functioning in daily life," adds DBCA President Mussie Gebre. Both AADB and DBCA question whether the FCC's initiatives concerning IP technologies include deafblind consumers.

About AADB

AADB is a national consumer organization of, by, and for deaf-blind Americans and their supporters. "Deaf-blind" includes all types and degrees of dual vision and

hearing loss. Our membership consists of deaf-blind people from diverse backgrounds, as well as family members, professionals, interpreters, and other interested supporters.

About DBCA

DeafBlind Citizens in Action (DBCA) is a federally recognized nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for deafblind people. We do this by providing leadership to the deafblind community; educating fellow citizens about their rights and responsibilities; and staying informed about current events and news on educational, technological, and national and state legislative developments that affect the deafblind community.