

As a person with a speech impediment I understand first hand the need for Speech-to Speech technology. I have been discriminated against countless times as a result of people at the other end of a phone call assuming I'm drunk and hanging up on me. This included a 911 operator I called on an occasion when my wife was bleeding to death. Fortunately, I called back and got a different operator who was willing to listen.

I am writing about TRS recertification of Speech-to-Speech. Please recognize that Speech-to-Speech has been a successful program and needs more funding to assist in consumer education by this state.

Please protect the state's speech-disabled population by including an outreach plan for STS in the recertification process. Section 225 of the Communications Act requires that the FCC ensure that both "interstate and intrastate telecommunications relay services are available, to the extent possible, to . . . speech-impaired individuals." The Maryland goal should be functional equivalency in both service and consumer education. Presently, the state appears to be violating the spirit of section 225.

Do not let a thriving program, that is aiding an ever increasing number of people with speech disabilities, simply die out from lack of funding for consumer education. The FCC should act now to raise awareness of Speech-to-Speech, by certifying Speech-to-Speech and increasing funding. Funding for functional equivalency in information about STS is funding the public good!

Yours Truly,

James W. Fee, Jr., MS