

Hello,

I have had the privilege of working with deaf individuals and assisting them with their videophone communication for over 6 years now as a Video Relay Interpreter. The service we provide has changed the interactions between Deaf and hearing people immeasurably.

We need to make sure that the Deaf community has access to VRS as well as having the VRS providers continue improving their service. The ADA requires Deaf individuals have "functionally equivalent" communications. By possibly lowering the rates for VRS, that will decide the future for providers. It may mean that Deaf users would have to go back to using TTYs which would be a huge step backward in the equivalence for communications.

VRS companies strive to continue to improve the quality of the service they provide. If the proposed cuts are made it would be disastrous for deaf VRS users. Our company has informed us that these rates would lead us into bankruptcy, which would mean that my job as well as countless others would be in jeopardy. Obviously losing your job is always terrible but in this economy finding a new job would be unbelievably difficult if not impossible.

VRS services have come so far since the inception, examples are enhanced 911, 10-digit phone numbers, our interpreters have received better training, and our videophones have received many enhanced features.

All of these improvements will be for nothing if the FCC doesn't encourage VRS providers to improve VRS and make it more widely available.

Please set a fair and predictable rate for VRS that will ensure VRS providers the ability to improve VRS and continue to reach more Deaf individuals. It is the law but more important its the right thing to do.

Thank you for your understanding and assistance in advance.

Tracy Shorter