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Waterfront Campus

May 21, 2010

Honorable Julius Genachowski, Chairman
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: CG Docket Nos. 03-123 and 10-51

Dear Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners Copps, McDowell, Clyburn, and Baker,

I am writing to express concern for the future of Video Relay Services in North America. I have been an interpreter since 1978 and an interpreting instructor with the Nova Scotia Community College for 17 years. The benefit of VRS to Deaf consumers is well known and well documented. The level of freedom and communication access that VRS provides has done more to enhance the everyday lives of deaf people than any other single development I have seen in my career.

Just as important, hearing people who would never know otherwise, are finding out that deaf people have “something to say”. From pizza joints to physicians’ offices, people everywhere are learning that deaf individuals are not intellectually inferior; they just use a language different from spoken English or Spanish. Video Relay Service has done more to advance this one, simple idea than all the interpreters and all the laws and all the community awareness programs put together. It is no small thing to change that many minds.

As coordinator for an interpreter-training program, I also see VRS as an incredible learning tool. Every year we are challenged to find enough field placements for our interpreting students. We have been fortunate to have the local VRS centre accept two students, for four weeks each. These students have a unique opportunity to learn from simulated VRS calls. We are proud that our students have been afforded this chance, which allows for a kind of learning we could never provide in the classroom.

Recent FCC news of possible VRS-rate cuts threatens the quality and volume of service. I want to join the great number of voices asking that the FCC not cut VRS rates so that everyone who now enjoys communication access will continue to be able to do so.

Sincerely,



Denise Smith,
Coordinator, ASL/English Interpretation Program

Cc.

Bruce Tawse, Dean, School of Applied Arts and New Media
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