

I am both a consumer of and an interpreter for video relay. I applaud the fact that fraud has been cleaned up out of video relay, and we can at last get to dealing with actual call volume, without adding any artificial minutes. Measures that weed out fraud, along with the examples that have been made of those who were punished, have been very successful at getting video relay back to what it should always have been, and now we begin the work of structuring the system in a way that is both efficient and effective. I do believe that it is not the time to switch over from paying per minute to paying per caller. It is wonderful that we will be having new requirements that will help us keep track of what the actual volume is, and I support those measures. However, I am in agreement with another filing I saw by several of the video relay companies asking that we get this information first, analyze it, and then make the decisions for restructured payment systems if it is warranted down the line, in a manner that corresponds to the statistics that will have been gathered by that point in time. As I have done in past comments, I ask that in any scenario that will reduce the amount of money reimbursed to the providers, that the Commission reduce any monies gently. We have weathered a number of budget cuts, while still providing the same service. Each time this is done, providers are left less able to retain interpreters who are capable of providing a truly equivalent phone call experience for video relay, particularly due to the unsafe working conditions that are far outside of industry standards for interpreting and are causing repetitive motion trauma and cumulative trauma disorders. Experienced interpreters who are eligible to work in the community are less likely to stay in relay if their salaries are cut, if their amount of time interpreting per shift is increased, or as is often the case, both. If the providers are said to be mismanaging the funds, and the providers believe that the Commission is not giving them enough funds, who gets caught in the middle? The very interpreters who are charged with interpreting the phone calls are left in a lurch and get no help at all. Many leave, and the providers are forced to hire inexperienced interpreters or those with lower skills. As callers, we struggle to work through these interpreters. They are just not ready. They belong in an environment where they can control the type of interpreting assignments they are accepting. Video relay will come later for them. It should not be the other way around. Otherwise, callers are the ones paying the price. Rather than have the commission and the providers point fingers at each other, I am hoping that we can all work together to help video relay always be the equivalency to a "regular" phone call that it is intended to be.

Respectfully submitted by

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