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July 2, 2012

VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Notice of *Ex Parte* Meeting, CG Docket Nos. 03-123 and 10-51

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On June 28, 2012, Claude Stout, Executive Director, Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc. ("TDI"), Andrew S. Phillips, Policy Attorney, National Association of the Deaf ("NAD"), Cheryl Heppner, National Advocacy Director, Association of Late Deafened Adults, Inc. ("ALDA") (together, the "Consumer Representatives"), Dr. Christian Vogler, Director, Technology Access Program, Gallaudet University and the undersigned met with Karen Strauss, Gregory Hlibok, Eliot Greenwald, Robert Aldrich, and Erin Bantz of the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, Sean Lev, General Counsel, Jonathan Chambers of the Office of Strategic Policy and Henning Schulzrinne, Chief Technology Officer to discuss the Video Relay Service ("VRS") Notice of Proposed Rulemaking ("NPRM") released on December 15, 2011.

The Consumer Representatives reiterated their support for a faster speed of answer benchmark, skills-based routing, and national certification for all communications assistants. The participants discussed whether the speed of answer benchmark should be faster than an average of 30 seconds. The Consumer Representatives said that they would support a faster requirement, but noted that the Commission should evaluate the feasibility of a faster benchmark if it is measured on a daily basis as the Consumer Groups have recommended.

As explained in their May 31, 2012 letter, the Consumer Groups propose that the Commission mandate skills-based routing and determine a different speed of answer benchmark for such VRS calls after a trial period. Consumers want to be able to select the communications assistant who handles their VRS calls, just as they are able to do with community based organizations that provide interpreters. The Consumer Representatives believe that skills-based routing would bring VRS closer to functional equivalency and potentially reduce VRS minutes of use. For example, communications assistants that are assigned at random may be more likely to have trouble communicating a technical conversation, both frustrating functional equivalency and unnecessarily prolonging a VRS call. The participants discussed whether VRS providers would offer skills-based routing without a Commission mandate. The Consumer Representatives expressed doubt that VRS providers would make such voluntary offerings given the

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speed of answer benchmark requirement. As the Consumer Representatives proposed in the May 31 letter, skills-based routing requires a temporary exemption from the speed of answer benchmark.

The participants discussed the fact that interpreters have filed letters in the record opposing national certification. The Consumer Representatives reiterated that the FCC should adopt a national certification system to ensure that all communications assistants meet minimum competency requirements. The Consumer Representatives acknowledged that national certification will not ensure quality interpreting services by all communications assistants, but argued that just as teachers and other professionals are required to receive certification, so too should interpreters receive certification. National certification would ensure that individual states do not develop lower, more lenient minimum requirements. As the Consumer Groups proposed in the May 31 letter, any objections to the time it takes to obtain national certification can be addressed by phasing in the requirement such that 100% certification is not required for some period of time, for example, five years. While the Consumer Representatives are willing to consider alternatives, they are not aware of an alternative measurement of quality interpreting. The participants discussed whether collecting and publishing complaint statistics would provide consumers with information necessary to evaluate VRS providers based on the quality of their interpreters, but the Consumer Representatives expressed concern that complaints must be easily filed, preferably in ASL, and there must be consequences for poor quality interpreters.

Dr. Vogler discussed three technical issues that are important to the Consumer Groups. First, consumers not only want split-screen technology, but it also will be an essential component of meeting the recommendations of the Emergency Access Advisory Committee.[1] He also expressed concern that VRS must be compatible with next-generation 9-1-1. Dr. Vogler referred the FCC to his March 9 comments on this topic[2]. Second, Mr. Vogler discussed interoperability tests that show more than one-half of all VRS phones have problems talking to one another. He also mentioned that VRS applications are months late in supporting new mobile phones, and that consumers desire to be able to call VRS via mainstream applications, which are much quicker to support new hardware. Third, Dr. Vogler expressed concern that the roles of VRS provider and equipment/SIP registrar are not clearly separated in the VRS reform proposals. Telecommunications providers are moving to a new standard, IMS, and it is not clear how VRS will work with that standard, as also evidenced in the CSRIC III Workgroup 1

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[1] FCC Emergency Access Advisory Committee. Report and Recommendations, January 26, 2012, available at http://www.fcc.gov/document/eaac-report-and-recommendations.

[2] *Structure and Practices of the Video Relay Service Program*, CG Docket No. 10-51, Comments of the RERC on Telecommunications Access, Section IV(filed March 9, 2012) , available at http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=6017024116.

report on next-generation 9-1-1 calling.[3] Dr. Vogler expressed his belief that if the two roles are better separated, it would permit both the registration of VRS-provided equipment with the VRS provider over the open Internet (which is the current practice), and the registration of IMS equipment with their carriers, and have both capable of making VRS calls. VRS users could choose and register their preferred equipment independently of VRS providers.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Tamar Finn

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Counsel for TDI

cc (by e-mail):

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Jonathan Chambers
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[3] FCC Communications Security Reliability and Interoperability Council III, Final Report of Workgroup 1, Subgroup 1, March 2012, page 12, available at http://transition.fcc.gov/bureaus/pshs/advisory/csric3/CSRIC-III-WG1-Subgroup-Final-Report.pdf.