

Chairman Genachowski,

CG Docket Nos. 03-123 and 10-51

My own words: I was raised by Deaf parents. I also have 8 deaf people in my family. VRS is the ONLY equal access telephone service they have ever had in my 60 years on earth. My mother who will be 86 in December is now home bound and VRS is her life line to her social worker, in home nurse, to me and my husband who help care for her, and to other family members. The development of the video phone and the interpreting services offered are critical to her well being: physically, mentally, emotionally.

I am a sign language interpreter, a human being, therefore, I have a heartbeat and I am NOT a dial tone (as described in FCC's definition of our work.) I worked in VRS for 4 years. I left because the system is OPPRESSIVE AND CRUEL to sign language interpreters. The FCC and some of the VRS companies are drowning and choking VRS sign language interpreters. Where is their input" The value of service we provide to Deaf consumers is immeasurable! It's the baby's birth, the grandmothers death, the business transaction, the educational information, etc. and the ability to be connected to a world from which you, as a deaf person, have always been DISCONNECTED.

Inherent in the true development of language fluency is years of experience and exposure. Well trained new interpreters take years to achieve fluency. VRS MUST HAVE HIGHLY QUALIFIED INTERPRETERS WITH YEARS OF PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WHO ARE MORE EXPENSIVE than new interpreters. I have witnessed it many times with my family ... NEW INTERPRETERS MAKE TOO MANY MISTAKES BECAUSE THEY CANNOT READ SIGN LANGUAGE AS FLUENTLY AS VRS CALLERS REQUIRE. The consequence to the individual deaf caller, depending on the subject, could be negatively severe.

I implore you to better understand the Deaf world and the profession of sign language interpreters because the FCC rules, IN MANY MANY UNFORTUNATE WAYS ... OBVIOUSLY does not understand the significant VALUE of a highly qualified sign language interpreter in VRS. HEARTBREAKING!

With all respect,
Gail Nygren
Coda (Child of Deaf Adults)
RID NAD IV Sign Language interpreter
Since 1991

The PAT petition:

I am writing in response to the FCC's request for comments on the "Structure and practices of the video relay service (VRS) program and on proposed VRS compensation rates." I am very concerned that the changes being considered will destroy a program that is vitally important to people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

I am not deaf, but I know firsthand how VRS works. VRS allows people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing to use the "phone" to communicate just like people who can hear. With VRS they can do the things we take for granted - make a doctor's appointment or call a child's school. VRS puts people who are deaf on a more level playing field.

The changes being considered by the FCC would undo much of this progress. VRS largely relies on highly skilled American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters. The FCC wants to drastically cut the rate they pay VRS companies for providing this service. Obviously, this will have an immediate and negative effect on the ability of VRS companies to employ and train qualified interpreters.

The FCC has also suggested that VRS can be just as effectively provided through government-mandated software that is used on off-the-shelf equipment like common videophones, computers, or tablets. While such equipment can provide a convenient backup solution, it can't replace the videophones and other technologies specifically designed to take into account the special needs of the deaf and hard-of-hearing.

If the FCC takes away skilled ASL interpreters and innovative equipment, VRS as we know it today won't exist. This would be a huge step backward for the rights and opportunities of Americans who are deaf and hard-of-hearing. Gail Nygren