

Chairman Genachowski,

CG Docket Nos. 03-123 and 10-51

I am a video interpreter who uses sign language to relay Video Relay Service (VRS) calls between deaf and hearing people. Because of my work with the deaf community, I understand first-hand how critical VRS communication is to deaf people and the hearing people with whom they communicate.

I understand the FCC is proposing changes to the VRS program. I am afraid these proposals will negatively impact the quality of service, interpreting, and equipment. The changes will also result in reduced access of VRS services for the deaf. I do not agree with your proposals!

VRS empowers deaf people to communicate on an equal basis with hearing people. Because of VRS, deaf people now have the opportunity to place calls and communicate the same way hearing people have been communicating for years. Deaf people use VRS to compete in the workplace, stay in touch with family and friends, contact their doctor, access emergency services and communicate in all the same ways hearing people do with their phone.

First, the proposal to create a standardized platform/application for use with off the shelf technology is hugely limiting to our work in VRS. The quality of the technology would be less reliable, making our work as VRS interpreters much more difficult. Furthermore, it would deny Deaf and Hard of hearing people the equal right to innovation that Hearing people enjoy. Hearing people have a myriad of competing companies, each try to push the envelope by creating new and better products, programs, and applications. By standardizing the VRS technology, you are removing this exciting and empowering aspect of VRS from the hands of deaf and hard of hearing consumers.

Further more the requirement that deaf and hard of hearing consumers purchase and install their own equipment is unreasonable and unequal. The necessary equipment is more costly and more complex than equivalent equipment for hearing consumers. Operating and installing the equipment would be beyond most people's capabilities, deaf or hearing, and any troubleshooting or technical support would be limited by the move to unified, off the shelf service. Currently, people have specific numbers that they know they can call to get specialists for their particular hardware needs. These specialists, in fact, are trained by the same company that made the technology, much like hearing people experience when they go to apple or samsung for tech support.

Altogether, I feel that the proposed changes are damaging to the innovation, improvement, and equality that the FCC and VRS providers are striving to create. Bret Stevens