

Chairman Genachowski,

Hello, and thank you for taking a moment to read this message!

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, VERY concerned about this and would like you to take a few moments to contemplate how important this is.

I will try to be brief and do hope that you take the time to read this.

I am not Deaf or Hard of Hearing. None of my family members are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. I do work as a part time VRS interpreter and as community interpreter.

I thoroughly enjoy (LOVE!) the work I do. I am amazed and impressed by how far VRS has come in the 4 short years I have worked with VRS.

In being part of how quickly and effectively the information can flow from one person to another through this VRS, I am telling you that it would be TERRIBLE and DANGEROUS to see steps taken backward. Whether a Deaf person is using VRS to make a medical appointment, talk to their brother, call their internet provider, dial for an ambulance, or to conduct business (keep in mind, these are things we can all do whenever we need to) they need this service and they need it to remain as high quality as it has come to be.

If you have any doubt, please seek out a deaf individual or two and ask THEM what it would be like if some or all of these changes take place. THEN, after you hear how essential it is that they have this communication access, imagine that your son or daughter or mom or dad, or a close friend were Deaf... wouldn't you fight for them to have the ability to access the schools, medical offices, 911, family, the way YOU can"" Of course you would.

I honestly do not know how many VRS users there are in the country, but there are THOUSANDS, for sure. I work an 8 hour shift a couple of times per week and almost never see the same individual twice. My point is that a step backward would affect all of these individuals (thousands) as well as all of the people they need to be in contact with.

We are not requesting anything special or above and beyond. The request is that you see the importance of the functional equivalency that exists now, and not take it away from the community of people who relies on it.

PLEASE please, in your busy day, take a few minutes to learn more about this. If you can get in touch with a Deaf member of your community who uses VRS, or a mom or dad with a Deaf child who utilizes VRS, ask them what their life is like with the service, and ask them how their life would be affected with a substandard VRS.

Thank you very much for reading this message typed from the heart.

~ maureen nikitass ~ maureen nikitass